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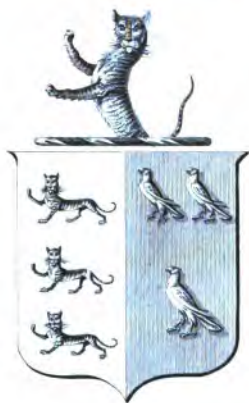
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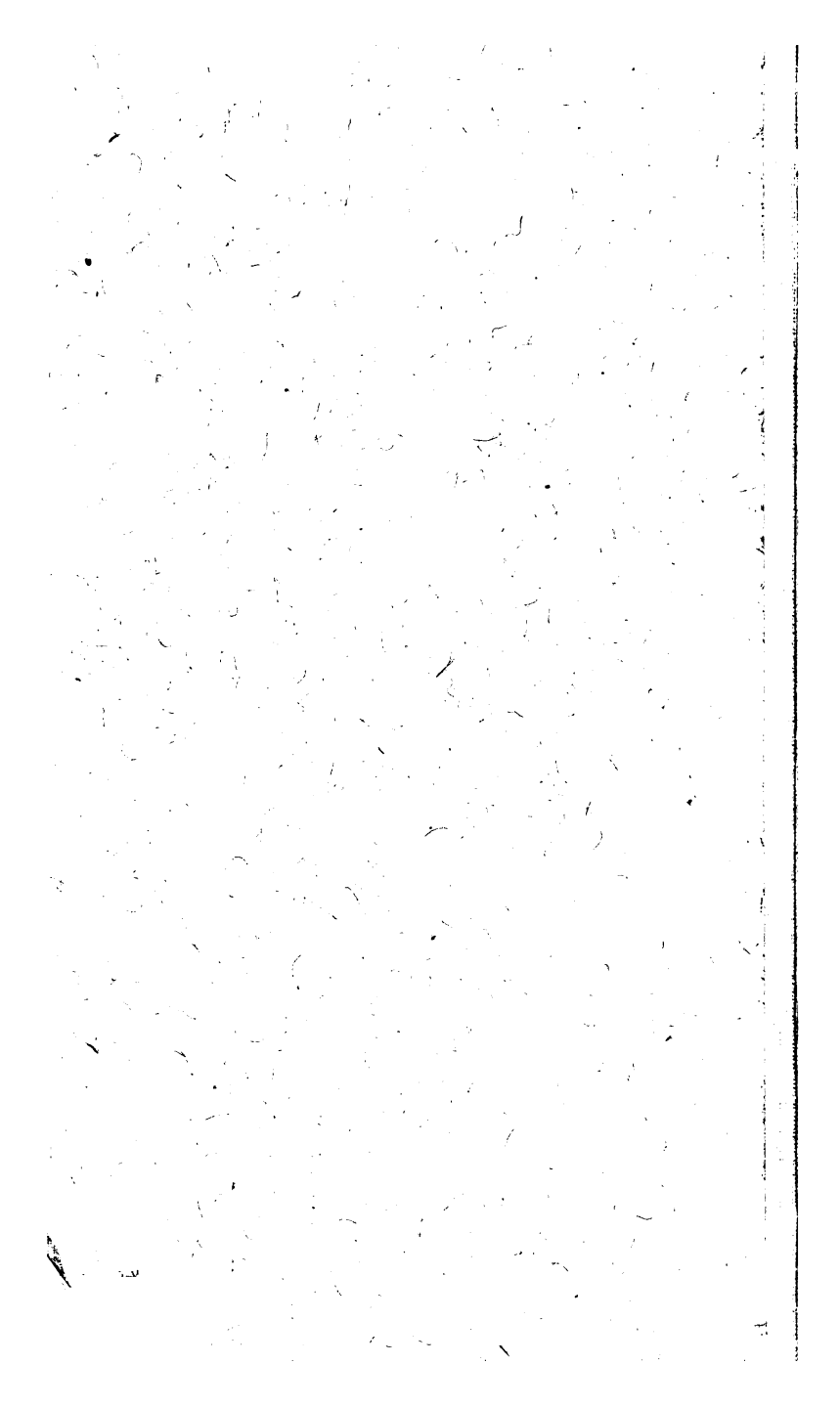
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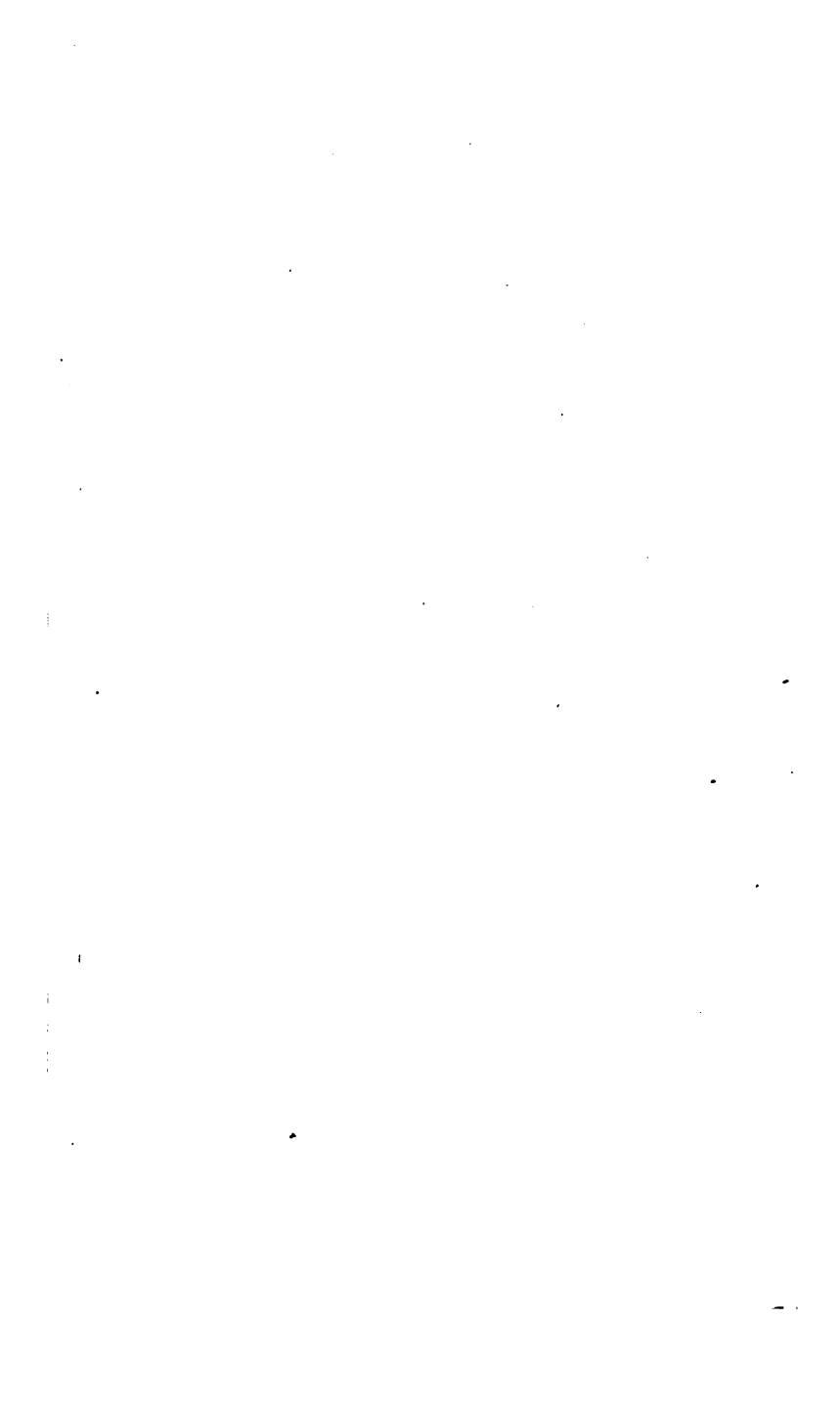


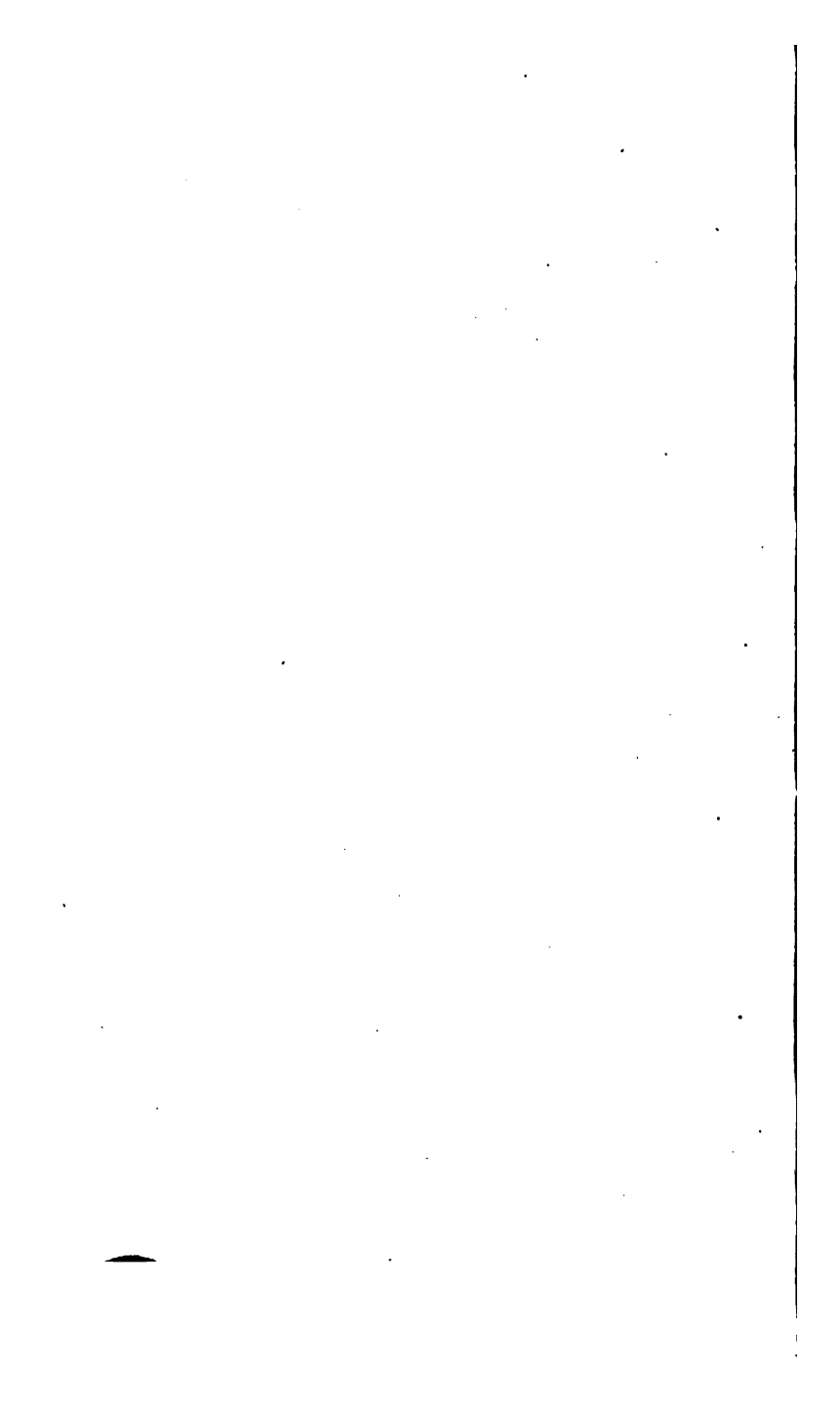
John Heale D.D.

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King's







E S S A Y S

M O R A L

AND

L I T E R A R Y.

BY

THE REVEREND MR. KNOX,

MASTER OF TUNBRIDGE SCHOOL, AND LATE
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VOLUME THE SECOND.

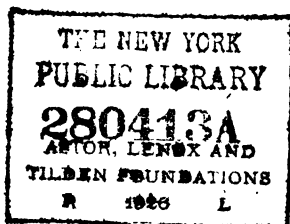
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WORLD WAR
1914-1918
1914-1918

P R E F A C E.

IT has been said that the preface is the most difficult part of a book. To speak of one's self with delicacy, is indeed at all times difficult; but when the omission would be improper, the difficulty must be overcome.

Since the appearance of the second edition of *Essays Moral and Literary*, it has been suggested to their author, by those whom the learned revere, that another volume would not be unacceptable. He therefore presents the subsequent pages to the Public, and hopes that a modest attempt to amuse and instruct, will want little apology.

He has ever been attached to letters as an amusement, and has derived an inward satisfaction of the purest and sincerest kind from literary pursuits. Every one who reads and reflects, will sometimes be induced to commit his observations to writing; and if he perceives that others are pleased with them, he will find the complacency which he experiences from commendation, and the pleasure proceeding from doing something for the benefit and entertainment of the community, strong temptations to impart his ideas to the public. Such were the author's sole inducements; for all who are personally acquainted with him will readily believe him when he declares, that interest is, and has been, entirely disregarded.

In

P R E F A C E.

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In whatever manner his book shall be received, he will not think the time lost that was spent in composing it, since it was passed at least innocently, and furnished a sweet relief in those moments of sorrow which are occasionally the lot of all who feel and think, and from which he has not been exempted.

Mistakes he may have committed, and he is ready to acknowledge them. For though he may have asserted with confidence the dictates of his conviction at the time he wrote, yet he is not dogmatical, nor will he maintain error with obstinacy.

From miscellaneous reading on subjects of morality and criticism, he has
himself

himself derived much pleasure, and will be happy in the reflection, if he can in any degree furnish, for an age that delights in reading, a similar entertainment.

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E S S A Y I.

ON ESSAY WRITING.

THOSE Sages of antiquity, who, from the improvements in knowledge and virtue, to which they advanced human nature, had the least dubious title to the appellation of wise men, were yet too modest to assume a name which had the appearance of ostentation, and rather chose to be called Philosophers, or Lovers of Wisdom. From similar motives, many of the Moderns, who have written with great skill on subjects of morality and science, have entitled their productions, *Essays*; a name, which, though it may now convey the idea of regular treatises and dissertations, is synonymous with the word

B attempts,

2 ON ESSAY WRITING.

attempts, and means no more than endeavours to instruct or amuse. A writer who, at a late period, pursuing the track of those celebrated authors who preceded him, boldly promises improvement on his predecessors, is received with that indignation which arrogance, even when supported by merit, naturally excites; but he who professes only an attempt, however unsuccessful, has a claim to candour and indulgence. Failure has ceased to be ridiculous, where presumption has not made pretensions, nor confidence anticipated success.

Many works therefore, distinguished by this title, have been well received, and have obtained a very exalted place in the scale of literary honours. None have become more popular in our own country, than those periodical papers, which were published by the Tatler, the Guardian, and the Spectator, and which have been successfully imitated by later writers. The taste and morals of the nation have been more generally improved by these excellent, though short and detached

ON ESSAY WRITING. 3

tached compositions, than by long regular elaborate systems. They were addressed to the heart and imagination, and fitted for the haunts of men engaged in the employments of common life; while scientific treatises of ethics were calculated only for the exercise of scholastic disputation; and their influence on the conduct of life, if they ever possessed any, was circumscribed within narrow limits. Addison, like Socrates, to whom he has been often compared, brought down knowledge from those heights which were accessible only to professed scholars, and placed it within the reach of all, who, to natural and common sense, added the advantage of a common education. He it was that stripped philosophy of that unbecoming garb in which she had been disguised by her mistaken followers, and represented her attired by the Graces, like the Goddess of Beauty.

The votaries of the severer muses have sometimes ventured to despise this entertaining species of productions as futile and superficial. They have asserted

4 ON ESSAY WRITING.

that truth needs not embellishment, and that the ornaments which she borrows from imagination, are no less unbecoming than unnecessary. But the real utility of literary labours is to be estimated by the extent of their influence on the national manners and understanding. Truth, however, delivered with that systematic precision which is approved in the schools of philosophy, will not have charms enough to detain the common reader who takes up a book for the amusement of a leisure hour, and who must be tempted to admire instruction, by the prospect of receiving pleasure. In every thousand of those that have been delighted with the papers of Addison, perhaps not more than one has heard of the Principia of Newton. Praises adequate to the merits of so exalted a genius, as was his who discovered the true system of the universe, can never be bestowed; nor is it detracting from his fame to assert, that since his theories require a painful attention to comprehend them, they will not generally be attended to in a commercial country like
our

our own, where only the short interval which the pursuit of gain, and the practice of mechanic arts affords, will be devoted to letters by the more numerous classes of the community. And indeed it must be confessed, that though the doctrine of attraction, or of light and colours, may be highly interesting to the man of science, and may qualify him for a professor's chair, or a seat at the board of longitude, yet it seems not to have any tendency to render him better in his civil and social relations. I never could find that the Elements of Euclid taught any one to be a better father, husband, son, or citizen; nor did I ever hear that he who took the most pains to square the circle, and spent his life in measuring angles and drawing diagrams, was at all more skilful in discovering the point of moral perfection, or in delineating the line of personal and of relative duty.

The great Bacon who pointed out the path to those sublime heights in philosophy, at which his followers have arrived,

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would never have brought his speculations home to men's business and bosoms, to use his own expressions; if he had not written his *Essays*, a work which, as it was of the most extensive consequence and most easily understood, was the most popular of all his productions. The remarks contained in it are such as shew that he had an intimate knowledge of the human heart, and they have a tendency to direct mankind in the right conduct of life. They are the institutes of a science which all wish to learn; but how few, in comparison, are interested in the *Novum Organum*? Whether a man adopt the hypothetical or experimental philosophy, is a matter of indifference to his moral conduct, nor is a Cartesian necessarily better or worse than the admirer of the more modern and more probable system. An error in physics is seldom productive of consequences injurious to one's neighbour or one's self. Bacon discovered new tracks of learning; he gave directions to pursue them; he banished hypothesis, and introduced

duced experiment; he is deservedly the glory of our nation as the restorer of true philosophy; but yet, without detracting from his merits, we may express our regret that he did not bestow more time and pains on the grand science of man. He appears, from the specimens he has left us, to have been better qualified to advance it to perfection than any modern. The example, however, of so profound, and in general so methodical, a writer, is sufficient to vindicate from the charge of futility, those little compositions, which, without the formality of studied treatises, aim at instructing the reader in the truths of ethics, of criticism, and of philosophy.

In an age when books and a competent education are easily attainable, all ranks will be found to devote a considerable portion of their unemployed time to some kind of reading. But what shall they read during the interval of half an hour, interrupted perhaps by the prattle of children, or the impertinence of visitors, or the calls of business?

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ness? not a long tedious treatise, divided and subdivided, and requiring at least the unsuspended attention of half a day fully to comprehend the whole. They seek relaxation, but they find a task; irksome, because it requires close application; and unimproving, because that application can only be desultory. But hard indeed must be his lot, who, in the most active and most dissipated scenes of life, cannot bestow that small space of time required in the perusal of an Essay of a few pages. He who possesses the Religion of Nature Delineated, will not easily find a better guide, but yet he will oftener be tempted to take the Spectator from his shelves. He who has never thought of reading the tedious, though instructive, conferences of Arrian, has perhaps committed to memory the Enchiridion of Epictetus. Even the form, the size, the weight of the volume are circumstances which deserve to be attended to in a subordinate degree, since they may contribute to render its influence more diffusive. Who could
bear

bear to carry a folio with him in his chariot, or recline on a sofa with a heavy quarto in his hand?

It must not, however, be supposed, that this kind of works is adapted only to the superficial reader. Many subjects of morality and learning have been concisely discussed in a few pages, with a depth, solidity, and originality of thought, rarely exceeded in any formal dissertation. The works of our English divines, the best moralists in the world, have sometimes lost their effect by their prolixity: for the mind of man, though comprehensive to a very great degree, is yet circumscribed within certain bounds, and like a full vessel, suffers all that is superfluous to run to waste*. But the periodical Essay satisfies the subject, without fatiguing attention, or over burthening the memory.

* Omne supervacuum pleno de pectore manat.

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10 ON ESSAY WRITING.

The detached nature of these writings, enables the writer to vary his style without impropriety, to be grave or gay, humorous or severe; to lay down positive rules, or to teach by example; to speak in his own person, or to introduce an instructive tale. Every volume contains a variety of subjects treated in various manners, and suited to the dispositions of different readers, or of the same reader at different times. Thus is idleness rendered attentive, and the listless moments of leisure are filled up with the advantages of study, unmixed with the toil of formal application. The faunterer is deceived, into employment, and the vicious, the dissipated, the busy, are, as it were, in spite of themselves, engaged in literary and philosophical contemplation,

Thus extensively useful and entertaining, no wonder Essays are more universally read than any other productions extant. The names and works of Montaigne, of Bacon, of Temple, of Addison, of Steele, and of their successful followers,

ON ESSAY WRITING. 17

ers, are held in a degree of esteem, which neither the lapse of time nor the caprice of fashion has been able to diminish. There is scarcely an individual, not only of those who profess learning, but of those who devote any of their time to reading, who has not digested the Spectators. Placed, however, in our hands in the earliest period of life, they have lost, in the eyes of many readers, the charm of novelty. To these perhaps new attempts or Essays, similar at least in kind, may afford entertainment. Nor should they be checked as presumptuous, since, without the spirit of adventure, modern literature would be at a stand. The fame of those writers, however great, is but adequate to their merits; but though it is true, they have presented us with much gold, much fine gold, yet the mine is rich, and will never be exhausted.

From the various combination of human passions, originally few in number, arises an infinite variety of moral appearances.

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pearances. Political revolutions, religious reformatations, the whims of fashion, and the changes in literature, enable the moral writer, when he travels even in a beaten road, to discover prospects hitherto unobserved.

The metropolis of a great empire flourishing in arts and commerce, is, as it were, the hot-bed of manners, in which every plant shoots up with unrestrained luxuriance. In a harvest so plentiful, not only those who first put the sickle to it, are rewarded with abundance, but many a loaded sheaf remains to be picked up by the careful gleaner. And happily for the morals, as well as understandings of our nation, the labourers have not been few nor unsuccessful.

The present age has been called an age of literary luxury; nor let it blush at the appellation. The passion for letters is attended with the sweetest satisfactions; and the indulgence of it tends to silence the importunity of other passions, which can seldom be gratified without consequent misery.

E S S A Y II.

CLASSICAL LEARNING VINDICATED.

A FEW men of wit and genius, who, in a long intercourse with the fashionable world, had probably forgotten that little knowledge of the ancient languages and authors, which they had acquired at school, have endeavoured to bring into discredit the prevailing mode of education, which devotes so much time to the study of Grecian and Roman literature. Men of uncommon natural parts, they have, perhaps, besides, enjoyed all those advantages of good company and extensive commerce with the living world, which both excite, and give occasion to display, great abilities. They were, therefore, distinguished characters in their time. But, whatever figure they made, they would

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would have shone with still greater lustre, if they had retained a tincture of that elegance and liberality of sentiment which the mind acquires by a study of the classics, and which contributes more to form the true Gentleman, than the substituted ornaments of modern affectation.

The example of these illustrious, but superficial personages, has induced every prater, who has been taught to lisp broken French, and dance a minuet, to laugh at the lubberly boy, as he calls him, who spends a dozen years at school, in learning Greek and Latin. He unfairly represents this time, as spent solely in acquiring the languages; ignorant, perhaps, that a taste is often formed in it for those authors, which furnish the purest and the most elegant pleasures during the remainder of life.

The pert vivacity of assured ignorance has often persuaded the fond mother to discard the tutor for the dancing-master; to be more solicitous that the hopes of the family, the heir, perhaps, to a title, an estate,

estate, and even a share of legislation, should be taught to hold up his head, than be furnished with those ideas, which would render him truly happy in himself, and an honour and advantage to his friends and to his country.

Even among those who are fully sensible of the necessity of improving the beauties of the mind, as well as the graces of the person, there prevails a predilection for modern languages and modern literature to the exclusion of the ancient. In the idea of these, a sufficient stock of historical knowledge is to be gained by an attention to the events of the two or three last centuries; and a sufficient acquaintance with philosophy and polite learning, from a perusal of the writers of France and Italy. Collections of letters and state-papers, and the epigrammatic narratives of the Historian of Ferney, are to supply the place of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Livy. Ariosto, Tasso, and Boileau, are read in preference to Homer, Virgil, and Horace; and the works of Voltaire alone are substituted

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tuted in the place of all the poetry, all the philosophy, and all the history that ever was written. In consequence of these mistaken notions, our great grammar-schools, that have produced so many ornaments of human nature, are exploded by many, as the seats of illiberal manners and of antiquated learning. To some academy, as it is presumptuously called, the poor youth is sent, in order to be trained to wisdom and virtue, under the direction of such sages as a French dancer and a Swiss renegado.

In answer to the charge, that illiberal manners are the disgraceful characteristic of boys educated in grammar-schools, I must confess I am pleased with the natural simplicity, and even rudeness, of that age of sprightliness and inexperience; nor do I know a sight more truly ridiculous, than that of a boy of fourteen affecting the Graces, and behaving among his superiors in age and attainments, with all the disgusting ease of self-sufficiency. The same natural good sense, which makes the boy act in character, will teach the
man

man a manly behaviour. And I believe every judicious person had rather see his son partaking of the noisy mirth of his school-fellows, than bowing and grinning in the insipid circle of a card-party.

With respect to the other charge, that classical education is a little out of fashion in some polite circles, we confess and lament its justness. But though we allow fashion to dictate without controul the exact dimensions of a buckle or a head-dress; yet a regard for the honour and happiness of human nature induces us to dispute her sovereign authority in those things on which depend the manners and sentiments of the rising generation.

If, however, it is maintained, that the true gentleman, the man of enlarged notions and polished taste, cannot, by any method of education, be so well formed, as by the classical, yet it by no means follows, that those whose happiness must, in a great measure, depend on less comprehensive views of men and things, should be instructed in the same mode. The time that is usually spent in Lilly's

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Grammar,

Grammar, and in acquiring just so much knowledge of the Latin language as may inspire vanity, but cannot enable a young man to enter into the spirit of an author, is certainly ill-bestowed. He who is designed for a mercantile life had much better be reading Wingate's Arithmetic than Cordery's Colloquies, and learning the Rule of Three than the Syntax. I have often pitied the poor boy, who has been whipt through all the classes of a school, as a preparation for a life to be spent in measuring tape and weighing plumbs. But the foundation of the mistake is obvious. There is, perhaps, a free-school in the neighbourhood, to which the barber of the place, the blacksmith, and the day-labourer, has as good a right to send a son, as the vicar and lord of the manor. The well-meaning parent is resolved his boy shall learn Latin, for it will make him an adept in an argument, and though he cannot give him houses and land, he is determined to bestow good learning upon him, which, he has often read on the cover of his grandmother's

mother's Pilgrims Progress, still retains peculiar excellence, even when house and land are gone and spent. To remonstrate is vain; and I knew a discreet person who advised a copper-smith, of that inferior class commonly called tinkers, to teach his son his own craft, rather than put him to the Latin school; but who, instead of the thanks which such wise counsel deserved, was treated with all that abuse which indigence, when it thinks itself insulted, can bestow.

The mistakes of well-meaning ignorance are to be pitied and excused. But how shall we apologize for those who move in a higher sphere, and who cannot but know, that the greatest men our nation has produced, whether greatness is estimated by power, wealth, birth, title, knowledge, or virtue, have laid the foundation of their eminence in our grammar-schools, where little else was taught but classical learning? how shall we apologize for these, when they slight a mode of education which the experience of ages has proved to be efficacious, and adopt

a new one, which, from its superficial nature, cannot form the man of dignity, or of just taste? Would More, Sidney, Raleigh, Milton, Temple, and many others, have arrived at that perfection of character, at which they aspired, under the superintendence of a *petit Maître*?

Some leading authors seem to wish that all our literary inquiries should be limited to that period which they are pleased to distinguish by calling it the age of Lewis XIV. It is indeed a shining interval in the revolutions of time; but most of the great characters that appeared in it, were formed on the models of a better age, the age of Augustus, or of Pericles. And I know not, whether the glorious reign of our own Elizabeth might not exhibit examples of probity and learning, valour and patriotism, more proper for the imitation of an Englishman, than those of any epoch in the annals of our rival nation.

While, however, we reprobate the idea of confining attention to the writings and transactions of the last three

hundred years, it must be confessed that this period deserves regard. The inventions of the compass, of printing, of gunpowder, and a consequent spirit of enterprize, have rendered modern times peculiarly interesting. During this period, the French nation, to use their own idea, have been remarkably awakened; nor will any man of letters, with just pretensions to taste, rest satisfied, without reading the works of Fenelon, of Fontenelle, of Boileau, and several others who wrote in the true spirit of the ancients. He will, after all, acknowledge, that they are but imitations of those originals, which are no less open to us than they were to them; and will confess it to be a want of spirit, to drink at the distant stream, when we have access to the fountain. If we can be contented with Imitations, we have excellent ones in the works of Pope and Addison. But what sculptor would be satisfied with examining the plaster bust, who was at liberty to walk in the Florentine gallery.

22 CLASSICAL LEARNING

There is something in the character of an Englishman analogous to the disposition of an old Roman. He has a natural generosity, and love of independence. He has also a gravity of temper, better adapted to mental and moral improvement, than any other; because more capable of fixed attention. French vivacity is foreign to his nature; fashion, indeed, makes him sometimes adopt it, but it fits awkwardly on him, lessens his inward consciousness of dignity, and lowers him no less in the estimation of others. The ideas of a Roman are congenial to him. His mind, when cultivated by a classical education, shoots up to maturity with the vigour of an indigenous plant, but thrives slowly, like the exotic, when nurtured only by the slender aid of French discipline.

The polish of external grace may be deferred till the approach of manhood. When solidity is obtained by pursuing the modes prescribed by our forefathers, then may the file be used. The firm substance will bear attrition, and

and the lustre then acquired will be durable. A sensible father, who is not himself a convert to the effeminacy of the times, had rather see a son forming himself as a scholar and a man, on the example of an old Roman or Athenian, than imitating, in his writings and actions, the undignified vivacity of a modern Frenchman or Italian. He had rather see him, in spite of the remonstrances of his nurse, flogged through a public school by a Busby, than conducted through the courts of Europe by a cringing valet. Let him but have digested his Homer, his Virgil, and his Cicero, and he will never appear deficient in the literary accomplishments of a gentleman. Let him possess that personal dignity which real merit only can confer, and his good reception in the world will be secure, though he should never have read a page of Lord Chesterfield.

Surely, no one will deny that the two principal objects in a well-conducted education, are to cultivate a good heart,

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and to give the understanding such additional strength and information, as may safely direct the heart in the various events of life, and teach the possessor of it to act up to the dignity of human nature. But the merely ornamental attainments have little tendency to accomplish either of these purposes. On the contrary, as they add a lustre without solidity, they induce idleness to content itself with the appearances of merit, which are easily assumed, and to neglect the reality as attainable only by painful application. They inspire confidence without worth to support it; they give an air of insolent superiority which commonly defeats their own purpose of pleasing; and however they may cause admiration in the dissipated and superficial, they are little esteemed by those, whose applause is valuable.

E S S A Y III.

STRICTURES ON MODERN ETHICS.

THE neglect of the classics, and of the ancient moral philosophers, in modern education, tends no less to injure virtue, and every valuable and lovely disposition of the heart, than to corrupt taste, and degrade dignity.

It is true indeed, the present times compared with the ancient, are properly the old age of the world. And if we reason from analogy, we must conclude, that they surpass in knowledge the ages which have preceded. Accordingly we find in all those things, a skill in which necessarily depends on long experience and extensive observation, the moderns possess an indisputable superiority. In useful science, and true philosophy, the ancients fall so short,

as not to bear the comparison. Aristotle and Pliny committed their dreams to writing, instead of an authentic natural history, and a rational system of physics. No one can justly question their ingenuity, but they wanted proper matter for its exertion. They were contented with reports, not only concerning subjects which they had no opportunity of examining, but concerning those which fell under their notice. They induced general remarks from too small a number of particulars. Pliny seems to have written a physical romance, with an intention to entertain, rather than discover and communicate severe truths. The more marvellous his representation, the better it answered his purpose, and it was not very likely to be strictly canvassed in an age when the true spirit of philosophical inquiry was unknown. Ptolemy's system was fanciful and absurd. Euclid was indeed truly great, and to his inventions the moderns are chiefly indebted for their improvements. But in his own time they seem to have terminated in speculation.

Of

Of Archimedes, prodigies are related. His mode of discovering the alloy of gold is an useful invention, but does not exceed, in point of ingenuity, many devices of the modern mechanic. The account of his burning a distant fleet by mirrors is not generally believed; and if it is true, a modern Frenchman is said to have discovered how it was effected, which required a sagacity little inferior to that of the original inventor. The ancients had not those instruments of science, the air-pump, the telescope, and the microscope. And among their principal obstructions, is to be numbered, the want of a conviction of the futility of hypothesis, unsupported by experiment. While the fancy was allowed to amuse itself in framing systems of its own, reason would not submit to the painful task of close examination. The sincerest admirer of the ancients will therefore, without reluctance, give up their pretensions to scientific excellence; and though he will recommend the study of Pliny as a classic who writes agreeably, yet will he advise
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votary of science to substitute, in the place of him and of all the ancient naturalists, the works of Boyle, of Newton, of Buffon, and of the numerous writers in the Philosophical Transactions.

But for their defects in natural, they fully compensate by their excellence in moral, philosophy. Mechanical instruments were not wanted to make observations on human nature. Natural sagacity, improved by generous education, and exercised in a civilized community, was enabled to make just conclusions concerning the powers, the passions, the duties, the vices of man as an individual, and as connected with others in domestic, social, and civil relations. The knowledge of nature and her operations, compared with the knowledge of ourselves and of our duty, is of small consequence. Sensible of this at a very early period, Socrates checked the flight of philosophy soaring to the airy regions of speculative physics, and taught her to walk among the haunts of men,

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The sages who issued from his school, are the Newtons of ethical science. If antiquity cannot produce a rival to this great modern, neither can later times exhibit moral writers equal to Plato, Xenophon, and Cicero, in the justness of their sentiments and the beauty of their expression. All of them have this distinction to separate them from the inventors of modern systems, that they viewed humanity in its true and honorable light, and urged mankind to aim at perfection, by encouraging representations of the extent of their powers and the dignity of their nature.

It is justly remarked, that our English divines are the best moralists which the world ever produced. But this is easily accounted for. They established their precepts on the firm basis of revealed religion, and not on the sandy foundation of human systems. But the misfortune is, that they are little attended to by those who stand most in need of reformation. The libertine, the man of the world, the polite modern philosopher,

pher, has been taught to associate the idea of dulness to a sermon, and would fear the imputation of prejudice, if he were to profess a belief of received religions, and conform his actions to their precepts. His creed is formed from the opinions of Voltaire, Rousseau, Helvetius, Hume, and many others who have of late perverted taste, genius, and learning, to the purposes of supporting libertinism in morals and opinions.

It is not likely that he who is taught to look upon himself only as an animal, furnished indeed with a superior degree of sagacity, but like his fellow-brutes doomed to perish for ever at death, should possess that elevation of sentiment which is necessary to constitute the great man in the private as well as the public scenes of life. His principles necessarily lead him to assimilate with those animals among whom he is ambitious of being numbered. The enjoyments of sense will be, in his idea, the chief good; and that severe virtue which can alone render him serviceable to the great community

munity of mankind, or distinguish him honorably in the society of which he is a member, he will esteem the characteristic of visionary enthusiasts, who know not the nature of man and the end of his existence.

To have that reverence for one's self, which arises from a just sense of the superior nature and endowments of a human creature, was a precept of the earliest philosophers*, and was thought to be the best security for a virtuous and generous conduct. It is not pride; for pride consists in arrogating merits to which it has no claim; but it is an adequate idea of our own dignity in the scale of being, and a resolution to support it. But how should he think or act like the Lord of the Creation, who is taught by the insinuations of modern philosophers, that man is to be classed in the same species with the ape, the monkey, and the orang outang?

Among the profligate, indeed, and the uninstructed, we see humanity sadly

* Παντων δι' μαλιστα' ασχυνιο σ αυτος.

ΡΥΤΗ.
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degenerated. Attentive only to the solicitations of the senses, and obedient to every passion, the vulgar, both of the higher and the lower ranks, lead a life truly and merely animal. If, however, it be wisdom to live according to nature, and the newly divulged opinion, that man is no more by nature, than a sagacious brute, be true, then are the basest and most worthless of mankind the patterns of imitation, and the only philosophers. Education, on these principles, is no longer necessary. The passions are competent guides, and the more violent they are, the more unambiguous their directions. Let our schools be shut up, for why should we be at the pains to study, while true wisdom and virtue are to be learned at an easy rate, of our brother beasts in the stable and the dog-kennel?

It has been the aim of Poets, Legislators, Sages, and Reformers, to advance human nature from its primeval rudeness, to all the perfection of which it is capable in a state of civilization. Men in general have willingly followed their dictates,
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and have found progressive happiness in progressive improvement. It was reserved for the present age of paradox, to reconcile the idea of advancement with retrograde motion, of improving human life, by restoring habits, principles, and weaknesses, long exploded and overcome. It is well known, that several celebrated writers have inferred the absurdity of many, not only innocent, but laudable and beneficial notions and practices, from their being unknown, or different from those established in savage nations. In order to imbibe ideas of decency and moral fitness, they have obliquely referred us to the groves of Otaheite. That such writers should have appeared, is wonderful ; but it is still more so, that they have found numerous readers and admirers. And it is a striking event in the history of mankind, that after the efforts of several thousand years in promoting civilization, many were found desirous of returning to the wretched practices of savage life.

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But even he who is taught to revere the wisdom of the naked Indian, and to despise the improvements of his own times and nation, is more likely to think and act with dignity, than the man who believes himself a machine. Such an one, to be consistent, must renounce the idea of the soul's supremacy over the actions of the body, and must resign himself to the impulse of that blood, of which alone he believes himself to consist. As an engine he will yield to every motion without resistance; for the perfection of the machine depends on its moving with the least possible friction or impediment. The mistake of him who looks on himself in this light, is equally absurd with that of the hypochondriac visionary, who, in the temporary madness of his reverie, imagines himself a goose or an addled egg.

The subtle disputatious style and manner in which the modern philosopher vents his sceptical ideas, though it may give his disciples a turn for metaphysics, and teach them to involve a dispute in perplexity,

perplexity, has very little tendency to improve the heart, to give a clearness of conception, or to teach a frank and manly conduct.

Aburd and pernicious as are most of the opinions advanced and maintained by modern philosophy ; yet an elegance of style, a vivacity of expression, a singularity of sentiment, have had charms sufficient to recommend it to many whose badness of heart is only equalled by the weakness of their understandings : weakness, I say, for cunning is not wisdom. Many of the great, the degenerate descendants of a debauched nobility, whose little minds have received the small degree of improvement of which they were capable, from a French master ; are the professed disciples of Voltaire : and the offensive swarms of paltry pretenders to wit and genius, who ground their pretensions on blaspheming their God and calumniating their neighbour ; and who prove the depravity of human nature by their own baseness, are the admirers of Hume and

Bolingbroke. This corruption has already spread far and wide, dissolving the bands of society, and diffusing personal misery. Whenever it shall become general, there is no doubt but that the over-ruling Providence which left not one stone upon another in Babylon, shall sweep away the nation in which it prevails, with the besom of destruction.

It is with a pleasure equal to that of turning from a putrifying carcase, to behold the living body in a state of youth and beauty, that I leave the poor inventions of the vain sceptic, and the gloomy metaphysician, to recollect the names and opinions of Socrates, Plato, Xenophon, and Cicero. From these I learn, that I have a soul within me, that shall survive its perishable habitation. These inform me, that human nature approaches to the divine; that virtue will make me happy in myself, and recommend me to the favour of that Being, who constantly superintends the world he first created.

The philosophy of the moderns excludes religion. Infidelity is its basis. But can there

there be a truly great man without religion? There may be a cunning, a witty, an audacious man; but there cannot be a great man without religion. Nor will he become a good senator, a good judge, a good commander, or fill the lower departments of civil and social life with integrity and honour, who disregards an oath, and from principle seeks only self-interest and private gratification.

The man of the world, it is true, will often discharge the duties of his station with regular propriety. A regard for fame, a desire to enlarge and to preserve connections, will keep him within the bounds of apparent rectitude. But, where deviation can be concealed, where compliance with temptation is compatible with safety, what shall restrain him? Nothing in the moral system of a modern unbeliever.

E S S A Y IV.

ON THE RETIREMENT OF A COUNTRY
TOWN.

*Roma: rus optas, absentem rusticus urbem
Tollis ad astra——* HOM.

SIR,

MY father had a lucrative place in the Customs; but as his family was large, he was unable to leave us fortunes, and contented himself with placing us in such situations in the world, as would give us an opportunity of acquiring a decent provision, if we should not be wanting to ourselves. It was my lot, after having received a tincture of classical education, to be apprenticed to a genteel business at the west end of the town. As soon as I was out of my time, I set up for myself; and though I cannot boast that I was ever in a very great way, yet, by attention and frugality, I had accumulated, at the age

age of forty, a sum sufficient to enable me to live in a comfortable manner, without the anxiety and confinement of trade. A handsome legacy from a relation of my wife, at once determined me, in my long meditated intention, to sell off at prime cost, and retire.

I had always entertained a great idea of the happiness of living in the country. It was, indeed, natural in one who had lived near forty years in a dusty warehouse, amidst the dirt, smoke, and noise of the Strand; and who had seldom made an excursion beyond the cake-house at Hoxton, or the bowling-green at Hackney.

One morning, while I was revolving in my mind the idea of retirement, I happened to cast my eye on an advertisement in the news-paper, in which a house, garden, and grounds, in a market town, about five and thirty miles from London, were announced to be let at fifty pounds a year. This appeared to me too advantageous a bargain to be neglected; for, you must know, I gave a hundred a year

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for my shop, the area of which was no more than three yards by four ; and here were twenty acres of land, and a mansion that would contain my house ten times over, to be let for half the money. There was no time to be lost : I shut up shop, took my wife and family down, and settled immediately.

As I did not go into the country on an economical plan, I was resolved to launch out a little, and live, as I could very well afford it, in a moderately genteel style. I set up a post-chaise, kept several horses, and two livery-servants. This appearance put me on a level with the best families in the neighbourhood, and accordingly I was visited by all who claimed the rank of gentlefolks.

But, alas ! I did not find in this place that happiness which I expected. I have been convinced by experience, that a market town is not a proper situation for those to retire to, who wish to taste the pleasures of rural life, and to pass the evening of their days in a state of tranquillity. That you may judge of the impropriety

priety of such a retreat, I shall give you an account of my reception in it, and of several circumstances, which render it less fit for the enjoyments of those peaceful and domestic pleasures, which every one that retires from business expects, than the noisiest street in the metropolis of the British empire.

The first visits were paid us from motives of curiosity, under the pretence of politeness. Our persons, our address, our characters, were examined with all the severity of criticism, but without the candour of benevolence. The various remarks that were made, furnished an inexhaustible fund of conversation for the next three months; and I have had an opportunity of procuring the literal reports of one or two of our examiners, which, as they have entertained me, I shall communicate for your amusement.

In the morning, after her first visit, the squire's wife set out to ease her mind of the burden of intelligence under which it laboured; which she did, in
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every house she entered, in nearly the following words :

“ Well, have you seen the new-com-
“ ers ? Pray how do you like Mrs.
“ Townsend ? Oh ! I have a charming
“ little anecdote concerning her. You
“ must know, I have learnt who she was
“ before she was married. I thought as
“ much—do you know her father was a
“ cheesemonger in Thames-street—but
“ he broke, you must know, and so
“ Miss was taken from boarding-school,
“ and in process of time arrived at the
“ high dignity of upper-maid to alder-
“ man Portfoken’s lady. But, being
“ vast pretty, you must know, and hav-
“ ing had a prodigious fine education,
“ Mr. Townsend the common-council-
“ man fell in love with her, and married
“ her. This is all fact, you may depend
“ upon it ; for our Sally heard it this
“ very morning at the shop.—Can’t
“ stay ; but thought I would call and let
“ you know. You see how high some
“ people hold up their heads, but you’ll
“ understand how to look upon ’em now.
“ —I

“ —I have a little hundred places to call
“ at;—so good morning.”

Miss Prue, a maiden lady of irreproachable character, set off on the same expedition, as soon as she had put on her morning-cap. Brimful of news, she could hardly contain herself till she got to the lawyer's brass knocker and mahogany coloured door. No sooner was she seated, than out it flew.

“ Well, Mrs. Leasum, we were at
“ the new-comers' last night; and such
“ a night! Why they know no more of
“ cards, than if they had not been used
“ to play above five or six times a week
“ in their lives. As to the father and
“ mother, one should not expect much
“ from persons, who, I suppose, got all
“ their money in Houndsditch; but really
“ I pity the poor girls. They sat mum
“ half an hour; and then asked me, Lord
“ help 'em! if I had read the last new
“ thing that came out. Pray what do you
“ think?—Some people say the younger
“ is handsome; and indeed she does
“ seem very good-natured. But as to
“ beauty!

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“ beauty !—all I shall say is—she does not
“ please me. To be sure, they are both
“ fair enough too—their features pretty
“ regular, and some think their eyes very
“ fine—but, Lord ! so awkward, so mo-
“ dest, and yet, at the same time, so
“ much of the city air about them, that
“ they are absolutely intolerable.—In
“ short, I don’t chuse to speak out—I
“ am always tender on the subject of
“ characters—but I have heard some-
“ thing—” Here she concluded with a
whisper, and in a great hurry withdrew.

The next house she called in at, was the apothecary’s. The apothecary was glad of a mouthful of news for his patients. His patients swallowed it eagerly, and soon afterwards evacuated themselves on all their visitors, who went home, in great spirits, to tell their families ; and thus, in the space of twenty-four hours, it was spread over the whole parish.

With respect to myself, at the first weekly club after our arrival, the Squire, the attorney, the apothecary, the maltster,

ster, and two or three gentlemen fots, who lived upon their means, as it is called, sat in judgment upon my character. After much debate, in which an equal portion of candour and discernment was displayed, I was found guilty of being a cockney, of never having hunted, of never having shot a partridge, of keeping a poor table, and yet, at the same time, living above my fortune; and lastly, of having a great deal of pride that little became me. The result was, that though they should condescend to call upon me, as long as my excellent pipe of Port lasted, yet I was not to be admitted a member of their jolly society.

It is true, I visit, and am visited; but as I really do not take much pleasure in a drunken bout; as I am not very well skilled in farming or fox-hunting; and, from a tenderness of constitution, am obliged to be abstemious in the articles of eating and drinking, we commonly have more form in our meetings than cordiality. To assemble together for the sake
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of liberal and manly conversation is held infipid. My sons are never at home, and my daughters, who have been taught to set a high value on mental accomplishments, neither give nor receive much satisfaction in the company of those, who think it the very summit of education, to have learned to dance, and play a minuet at a boarding-school.

The envy, the jealousy, and the impertinence of the lower sort of people, is not less conspicuous and troublesome, than that of their superiors. If we send to buy any thing, we are forced to pay something more than any body else, because we are the rich new-comers. If my cow happens to break into neighbour Hodge's field, she is pounded without notice, because forsooth she is the Londoner's cow. If we walk down the town, all the doors and windows are flung open, and crowded with spectators, just as if my Lord Mayor's show was passing by. My poor wife and daughter's filks and fattions are criticized with unrelenting severity. "It is my opinion, John," cries one, "that

“ that my best Sunday cotton that I had
“ on, when I was married to thee, cost
“ more money than yonder fine silk that
“ Miss flaunts it in.” “ Aye,” subjoins
another, “ fine feathers make fine birds
“ —but I wish somebody is not crook-
“ ed—I can perceive it for all her
“ pads”—and truly because I don’t
chuse to wear leather breeches and a lit-
tle round hat, every hostler at the inn
gates stands smiling with his arms fold-
ed, and tips his comrade the wink,
to smoke the cockney.

Whenever my servants go to any shop,
a set of gossips make a point of meeting
them, in order to ask what I had for din-
ner, how much small beer is consumed
by us in a week, and a thousand similar
questions. No little art is made use of
to persuade them that I am stingy, and
that my place is the worst in the town;
though to my certain knowledge I am
so far imposed upon, being a stranger,
as that I am forced to pay a third more
wages than any body else in the neigh-
bourhood.

Nothing

Nothing passes in my house but it becomes matter of general conversation. If a cousin or an old acquaintance comes from London to spend a few days with me, no pains are spared to learn of the servants who and what he is; and if my servants know nothing about him, Miss Prue takes care to suggest, that he is in some low trade, a mere mechanic in his best suit of cloaths. If he should take an evening walk with my daughters, unaccompanied with me or my wife, He is going to be married to one of them directly. His name, his age, his origin, are immediately divulged; the fortune on both sides ascertained, and, the day fixed.

If my wife and I happen to spar a little, as is usual, among those who love one another with the sincerest affection, a report is immediately circulated that I use my wife ill, or that she uses me ill, and that, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary, we do not live happily together. I can never buy nor sell a horse, a cow, or a pig, nor change a servant, but

but I am called behind my back a fool for my pains, and it is hinted that I do not know what I am about; and indeed how should I, since I am a cit. If I make an alteration in my garden, dig a ditch, mend a pigstye, or thatch a hovel, my taste, my judgment, my prudence, are called in question, and it is charitably wished that I do not bring my noble to ninepence, and my ninepence to nothing. If, by the carelessness of my cook-maid, a joint of meat should happen to be a little tainted in the dog-days, it gets wind, and it is immediately said that I feed my family on stinking meat for cheapness. If a loaf should be a little mouldy in damp weather, I am railed at for keeping my bread till it is spoiled, rather than give it a poor creature who is perishing with hunger. In short, hardly a mouse can stir in any part of the house from the parlour to the scullery, but the chandler-shop-keeper, the landlady at the alehouse, and the mantua-maker, find means to get a knowledge

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of it for the entertainment of their customers.

Till I lived in this place, I never thought myself of such consequence, as to merit general attention. In London, my next door neighbour neither knew nor cared what passed in my parlour and kitchen. I can however easily account for this difference. In a market town of no great opulence or extent, there are not objects enough to divert the idle. No plays, no auctions, no fine shops, no shew-glasses. Scarcely any amusement for sots, gossips, and old maids, but thinking and talking on the affairs and families of other people. The settlement of a stranger in their town is food to them for years. They have been too long used to the natives to find any novelty in their concerns, and perhaps have been induced to regard them with that partiality of long acquaintance or of relationship, which precludes malevolence. But strangers are lawful game; and the cruelty of little minds is found to take a pleasure in detracting from their

their characters, and defeating, by false and malignant representations, those schemes of happiness with which they flattered themselves in retirement.

Sick of such impertinence, and disgusted with the ill-nature of all around me, I have resolved to quit the market town, and have just hired a house delightfully situated in a distant village. It is the paternal habitation of a man, who, having hopes of rising at court, chuses to leave this charming retreat, for a small dark house in one of the dismal lanes that lead into the Strand. I shall have no near neighbours but the vicar, who is not only a learned, virtuous, religious, and benevolent, but also an agreeable man. His family, all of whom have that elegance of mind which results from a taste for letters, will be much with mine. They have already formed a reciprocal attachment. And I hope to have found at last in this place, that happiness, which I vainly sought in a more frequented situation. Of this I am confident, that the honest simplicity

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of the rustics, if it is not agreeable, is far less disgusting than the pert, affected, ill-natured airs and manners of the little half bred gentry in many country towns.

The beauties of nature untouched by art, an air sweet as it blows over the blossomed vale, peaceful hours, social cheerfulness, domestic joys, rural dignity—these are mine in my village retreat. Nor do I regret the loss of formal visits, and that wretched intercourse with little minds, which, while it wore away life in insipidity, exposed me to the envenomed shafts of unmerited detraction.

E S S A Y V.

ON EPISTOLARY WRITERS.

WHEN a writer has distinguished himself in his studied performances, and pleased us in those works, which he intended for our perusal, we become interested in all that concerns him, and wish to be acquainted with his ideas, as they flowed, without any view to their publication, in the open communications of a private and friendly correspondence. Beautiful minds, like beautiful bodies, appear graceful in an undress. The awe which they inspire, when surrounded with all their dignity, is sometimes more striking than pleasing; but we feel ourselves relieved when admitted to their familiarity. We love to retire behind the scenes, and to observe the undisguised appearance of those, who

please us, when industriously decorated for public exhibition. Hence the private letters of great men have been always read with avidity.

The Greeks have not left many models in the epistolary style. There is no doubt but Xenophon excelled in it, though most of the letters which he wrote, have either not been collected or not preserved. Those of Socrates, Antisthenes, Aristippus, Xenophon, Æschines, and Philo, have never been popular. Those which pass under the name of Aristænetus, are of a taste less resembling the attic, than the oriental. The descriptions are poetically luxuriant, but the language is not pure, nor the style simple.

The epistles of Phalaris have been much read by the learned, but though they are curious monuments of the genius of the tyrant, they are not admirable specimens of epistolary composition. They are more known from the violent dispute they occasioned between Bentley and Boyle, than from their intrinsic merit. In some part of that famous controversy,

verſy, Bentley ſays, with his uſual acrimony, that Boyle had made a bad book worſe by a bad edition of it.

Cicero, the world's great model in the oratorical and the philoſophical, is no leſs eminent in the epiſtolary ſtyle. He rivalled his great patterns, the Greeks, in eloquence and philoſophy; he excelled them in his letters. His letters, indeed, were the genuine productions of his un-aſſiſted genius, and have a grace peculiar to themſelves. Many of his other works are profeſſedly imitations; but conducted with that art which characteriſes genius, and appropriates all it handles. His letters were not ſtudied, they were the effuſions of the moment, they aroſe from the occaſion, and pleaſe from their air of truth and unaffected propriety. Whether buſineſs, pleaſure, politics, philoſophy, or conjugal and paternal affection, are their ſubjects, they are equally excellent, and equally pleaſing. He wrote them without the leaſt view of their coming to the public eye, and to this circumſtance they owe a great ſhare of their merit, their

freedom from affectation. Near a thousand of them remain, and furnish abundance of historical information, at the same time that they exhibit the best models for this species of writing. They are thought not to appear to the best advantage in the specimens which Dr. Middleton has inserted in his life of Cicero. No one was better able to do them justice, than that great biographer; but it is said, he committed the task of translation to some inferior writer.

There was an age when the letters of Pliny were preferred to those of Cicero. They have, indeed, the glitter of an artificial polish, but they want the more captivating grace of natural beauty. They were studied, and they wear the appearance of study. He who delights in elaborate and highly finished composition, will be gratified in the perusal of Pliny, but he will at the same time regret, if he has a taste for propriety, that this labour was not bestowed where it would have been better placed. In a philosophical discourse, or a formal harangue,

range, we expect the interposition of art; but in an epistle, we look for the effusions of nature, rather than the efforts of ingenuity.

Seneca's Moral Essays have little right to the name of Epistles, with which he distinguished them. They are little more than a collection of common-place observations, abounding in wit and ingenious turns, but wholly destitute of elegance and grace. His faults, indeed, are sweet, as Quintilian said; but it is a sweetness which cloy, and can scarcely please any but a vitiated appetite.

After the Latin had ceased to be a living language, many excellent books of letters were written in it. It was the universal language of learning. The literati of different nations, the rude languages of which would not repay the labour of cultivation, wisely chose to communicate their thoughts in the pure dialect of the court of Augustus. Some of the earliest of these are disgraced by the barbarism of the times. But Petrarch shines amidst the surrounding obscurity.

scurity. True genius, like his, was sure to display its lustre, though it laboured under the disadvantage of a prevailing corruption of taste.

Politian had just pretensions to true genius. There is a warmth and vigour in his poetry, which fully proves him to have been capable of attaining to a much higher degree of excellence, than his premature death allowed. His epistles are elegant, but like those of Pliny, whom he imitated, they are formal and affected. They are however pleasing to the reader, and abound with beautiful language.

Erasmus, a name that shines forth with peculiar glory in the annals of literature, justly possesses the first rank among the modern epistolary writers. His style is not purely Ciceronian, though it displays many of its graces. It is entirely his own, though it often rises to a level with classical excellence. He was not so scrupulously exact in his taste, as to reject a barbarous and Gothic expression; if it conveyed his ideas precisely. But
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he had the skill to use it with such propriety, that it acquired, in his writings, a grace and dignity. No man was better acquainted with the works of Cicero; no man, after a few prejudices, formed in his youth, were removed, entertained a higher opinion of his beauties, or knew better how to imitate them. But he despised the sect of Ciceronians, who would scarcely admit a particle that was not to be found in their favourite author. He ridiculed them with admirable wit and eloquence, in his dialogue Ciceronianus; nor would he give countenance to so ridiculous an affectation, by any part of his writings. More studious of copiousness and variety of matter, than of a scrupulous imitation of any model, he selects the most expressive word he can find in the language, and, by a judicious composition, renders it agreeable and proper. With all their defects in point of purity of language, his letters are uncommonly entertaining; and have that spirit, which genius always can exhibit, but which laborious dulness vainly imitates.

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tates. There is a fund of Lucianic humour in all his more familiar writings; in his colloquies it is most conspicuous; but it is also very remarkable in many of his epistles. Had he lived in an age when polite learning was more generally encouraged and cultivated, his productions would have been models of elegance, not inferior to the boasted reliques of antiquity. But, unfortunately, he was engaged in the unpleasing disputes of pedantic theologists; and, instead of treading the flowery paths of Greek and Roman literature, for which he was adapted by nature, was obliged to toil through the thorny mazes of a barbarous, perplexed, and irrational system of divinity. His liberal mind soon perceived, and as soon avowed, the absurdity of the received modes and opinions; but he had too great a veneration for genuine christianity, to neglect those studies, which his profession, as a christian and an ecclesiastic, naturally led him to cultivate. He saw, and in great measure avoided, the inelegancies which abounded

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ed in the theological writings of his times; but it was not easy always to be upon his guard against them; and his mind retained a tincture of them, as waters are polluted with the impurities through which they flow.

I omit a great number of epistolary writers, who had little merit of their own, and who derived all their fame from a servile imitation of Cicero. Among these is Paulus Manutius, who is said to have often spent a month in writing a single letter. We see, indeed, in consequence of this scrupulous attention, an elegant and truly Ciceronian phraseology; but we observe none of the native graces of unaffected composition.

Our neighbours, the French, have arrogated great merit, as epistolary writers. Their genius and their language appear to be well adapted to excel in it. But some of their most celebrated writers have renounced the advantages which nature gave them, and have spoiled all the beauties of sentiment and vivacity, by an
unseasonable

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unseasonable profusion of wit. Balzac wearies his reader with the constant recurrence of laboured ingenuity.

Voiture abounds with beautiful thoughts expressed with great elegance. The language of compliment disgusts, in other writers, by its unmeaning sameness and formality. He has given it the grace of delicacy. But even he, though indisputably a fine writer, is justly censured by Bohours, for what are called false thoughts. Like many others, he has neglected real beauties for artificial ornaments.

Our own countrymen have honourably distinguished themselves in this, as well as in every other kind of elegant composition. The style of Swift is thought, by many, to excel all others. It has purity, ease, expression, and force. Pope's Letters are lively and delicate. Shenstone's are much read; but it may be doubted whether they have that peculiar and striking excellence, which should
place

place them among the classics of our country.

The late Lord Chesterfield, though justly decried as a moral instructor, is admired as a writer of peculiar elegance. No man more closely and successfully imitated the French, in every circumstance. Like them, he writes with perspicuity, vivacity, and that gracefulness which is sure to please, and which he so strenuously recommends. He is himself a proof of the efficacy of grace; for, with all his merit, he was certainly superficial, and yet obtained a degree of fame, which more solid writers have seldom possessed.

Much has been said on the epistolary style; as if any one style could be appropriated to the great variety of subjects which are treated of in letters. Ease, it is true, should distinguish familiar letters, written on the common affairs of life; because the mind is usually at ease while they are composed. But, even in these, there incidentally arises a topic,

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which requires elevated expression, and an inverted construction. Not to raise the style on these occasions, is to write unnaturally ; for nature teaches us to express animated emotions of every kind in an animated language.

The impassioned lover writes unnaturally, if he writes with the ease of Sevigny. The dependent writes unnaturally to a superior, in the style of familiarity. The suppliant writes unnaturally, if he rejects the figures dictated by distress. Conversation admits of every style but the poetic, and what are letters but written conversation ? The great rule is, to follow nature, and to avoid an affected manner.

E S S A Y VI.

ON THE HAPPINESS OF DOMESTIC LIFE.

————— Quod petis hic est
 ————— Animus si te non deficit æquus.
 HOR.

AN active life is exposed to many evils which cannot reach a state of retirement; but it is found, by the uniform experience of mankind, to be, upon the whole, productive of the most happiness. All men are desirous of avoiding the listlessness of an unemployed condition. Without the incentives of ambition, of fame, of interest, of emulation, men eagerly rush upon hazardous and painful enterprises. There is a quick succession of ideas, a warm flow of spirits, an animated sensation, consequent on exertion, which amply compensates for the chagrin of disappointment, and the fatigue of uninterrupted attention.

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One of the most useful effects of action is, that it renders repose agreeable. Perpetual rest is pain of the most intolerable kind. But a judicious interchange of rest and motion, of indolent enjoyment and strenuous efforts, gives a true relish of life; which, when too tranquil, is insipid, and when too much agitated, disgustful.

This sweet repose, which is necessary to restore, by relaxing the tone of the weary mind, has been sought for by the wisest and greatest of men at their own fire-side. Senators and heroes have shut out the acclamations of an applauding world, to enjoy the prattling of their little ones, and to partake the endearments of family conversation. They knew that even their best friends, in the common intercourse of life, were in some degree actuated by interested motives in displaying their affection; that many of their followers applauded them in hopes of reward; and that the giddy multitude, however zealous, were not always judicious in their approbation.

But

But the attentions paid them at their fire-side, the smiles which exhilarated their own table, were the genuine result of undissembled love.

The nursery has often alleviated the fatigues of the bar and the senate house. Nothing contributes more to raise the gently pleasing emotions, than the view of infant innocence, enjoying the raptures of a game at play. All the sentiments of uncontrolled nature display themselves to the view, and furnish matter for agreeable reflection to the mind of the philosophical observer. To partake with children in their little pleasures, is by no means unmanly. It is one of the purest sources of mirth. It has an influence in amending the heart, which necessarily takes a tincture from the company that surrounds us. Innocence as well as guilt is communicated and increased by the contagion of example. And the great author of evangelical philosophy has taught us to emulate the simplicity of the infantine age. He seems indeed himself to have been

delighted with their presence, and found in them what he in vain sought among those who judged themselves their superiors, unpolluted purity of heart.

Among the great variety of pictures which the vivid imagination of Homer has displayed throughout the Iliad, there is not one more pleasing than the family-piece which represents the parting interview between Hector and Andromache. The heart is interested as well as the imagination delighted. The hero ceases to be terrible, that he may become amiable. We admire him while he stands completely armed in the field of battle, but we love him more while he is taking off his helmet, that he may not frighten his little boy with its nodding plumes. We are refreshed with the tender scene of domestic love, while all around breathes rage and discord. We are pleased to see the arm which is shortly to deal death and destruction among a host of foes, employed in careressing an infant son with the embraces of paternal love. A professed
critic

critic would attribute the pleasing effect entirely to contrast, but the heart has declared, previously to the inquiries of criticism, that it is chiefly derived from that satisfaction which we naturally take in beholding great characters engaged in tender and amiable employments.

But after all that is said of the purity and the solidity of domestic pleasures, they unfortunately appear to a great part of mankind, insipid, unmanly, and capable of satisfying none but the weak, the spiritless, the inexperienced, and the effeminate. The pretenders to wit and modern philosophy are often found to renounce the received opinions of prudential conduct; and while they affect a superior liberality, to regulate their lives by the most selfish principles. Whatever appears to have little tendency to promote personal pleasure and advantage, they leave to be performed by those simple individuals, who are dull enough to pursue the journey of life by the straight road of common sense. It is true, they will allow, the world

must be replenished by a perpetual succession; and it is no less true, that an offspring once introduced into the world, requires all the care of painful attention. But let the task be reserved for meaner spirits. If the passions can be gratified without the painful consequences, they eagerly seize the indulgence. But the toil of education they leave to those who are fools enough to take a pleasure in it. There will always be a sufficient number whose folly will lead them, for the sake of indulging their passions, to engage in a life of perpetual anxiety. The fool's paradise will never be deserted.

Presumptuous as are these pretenders to a newly invented system of philosophy, it is not to be supposed they will think themselves superior to Cicero. Yet Cicero, with all his liberality of mind, felt the tenderness of conjugal and paternal attachment, and acknowledged that, at one time, he received no satisfaction in any company but that of his wife, his little daughter, and, to use his own epithet,

epithet, his **HONIED** young Cicero*. The great Sir Thomas More, whom nobody will suspect of narrowness of mind, who by a very singular treatise evinced that he was capable of thinking and of chusing for himself, has left it on record, that he devoted a great share of his time, from the united motives of duty and delight, to the amusement of his children.

It will be objected by those who pretend to have formed their ideas of life from actual observation, that domestic happiness, however pleasing in description, like many a poetic dream, is but an alluring picture, designed by a good heart, and painted in glowing colours by a lively fancy. The constant company, say they, even of those we love, occasions an insipidity. Insipidity grows into disgust. Disgust, long continued, sours the temper. Peevishness is the natural consequence. The domestic circle becomes the scene of dispute. Mutual antipathy

* Ut tantum requietis habeam quantum cum uxore et filiola et MELLITO Cicerone consumitur.

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is ingenious in devising mutual torment. Sullen silence or malignant remarks fill up every hour, till the arrival of a stranger causes a temporary restraint, and excites that good humour which ought to be displayed among those whom the bonds of affection and of blood have already united.

Experience, indeed, proves that these remarks are sometimes verified. But that there is much domestic misery, is no argument that there is no domestic happiness.

Natural stupidity, natural ill-temper, acquired ill-habits, want of education, illiberal manners, and a neglect of the common rules of discretion, will render every condition disagreeable. When those are united by connubial ties, who were separated by natural and inherent diversity, no wonder if that degree of happiness which can only result from a proper union is unknown. In the forced alliance, which the poet of *Venusium* mentions, of the serpent with the dove, of the tyger with the lamb, there can be

no love. When we expatiate on the happiness of the domestic groupe, we presuppose that all who compose it are originally assimilated by affection, and are still kept in union by discreet friendship. Where this is not the case, the censure must fall on the discordant disposition of the parties, and not on the essential nature of domestic intercourse.

To form, under the direction of prudence, an early conjugal attachment, is one of the best securities of virtue. The duties called forth by the relations of husband and father, are of that tender kind which inspires goodness and humanity. He who beholds an helpless infant looking up to him for support, will not easily be induced to indulge in unbecoming extravagance, or devote himself to indolence. He who has a rising family to introduce into a vicious world, will be cautious of setting a bad example, the contagion of which, when it proceeds from parental authority, must be irresistibly malignant. Thus many who in their individual and unconnected state,
would

would probably have spent a life not only useless to others, but profligate and careless in itself, have become valuable members of the community, and have arrived at a degree of moral improvement to which they would not otherwise have attained.

The contempt in which domestic pleasures have in modern times been held, is a mark of profligacy. It is also a proof of a prevailing ignorance of real enjoyment. It argues a defect in taste and judgment, as well as in morals. For the general voice of the experienced has in past ages declared, that the truest happiness is to be found at home.

E S S A Y VII.

ON THE MERITS OF COWLEY AS A
POET.

THE biographers of our English authors have sometimes fallen into a mistake, which renders the truth of their story suspected. Their accounts are truly panegyrics. The hero of their tales, like the lover in the romance, is adorned with every good quality. Not content to relate facts with impartiality, they extenuate what is culpable, and exaggerate all that can admit of commendation. In truth, they who have exhibited the lives of our authors, have usually been the editors of their works; and either from a real and natural fondness for those things on which they have bestowed care,
or

or from the less laudable motive of promoting the circulation of a book in which they were interested, have spoken too highly even of those who merit moderate applause. But it is not wonderful if the trader represents his own merchandize as the best in the market-place.

It was the lot of Cowley to be handed down to posterity by a writer who was famous in his day for eloquence. Dr. Sprat probably undertook the office of a biographer, with a design to display his talents in a species of oratory which the Roman rhetoricians called the demonstrative. He discharged it well as an artist, but failed as an accurate historian. By placing Cowley in the first rank of poets, he has in effect degraded him from the subaltern station which he had else preserved unmolested. Dr. Sprat owed much of his own fame to the poet who had compared his style to the gentle and majestic current of the Thames; and returned the compliment, perhaps from other motives than those of gratitude; for the higher Cowley was exalted, the greater honour
was

was reflected on those whom he had commended. Of this celebrated Bishop of Rochester, Lord Orrery has said, few men have gained a greater character for elegance and correctness, and few men have deserved it less. And of the poet whom he praised, the great Dryden has with diffidence remarked, that somewhat of the purity of English, somewhat of more equal thoughts, somewhat of sweetness in the numbers, in one word, somewhat of a finer turn and more lyrical verse, is yet wanting.

Whatever are his defects, no poet has been more liberally praised. Lord Clarendon has said, he made a flight above all men; Addison, in his account of the English Poets, that he improved upon the Theban bard; the Duke of Buckingham upon his Tombstone, that he was the English Pindar, the Horace, the Virgil, the Delight, the Glory, of his Times. And with respect to the harshness of his numbers, the eloquent Sprat tells us, that if his verses in some places seem not as soft and flowing as one would
have

have them, it was his choice, and not his fault.

Such is the applause lavished on a writer who is now seldom read. That he could ever be esteemed as a pindaric poet, is a curious literary phænomenon. He totally mistook his own genius, when he thought of imitating Pindar. He totally mistook the genius of Pindar, when he thought his own incoherent sentiments and numbers bore the least resemblance to the wild, yet regular sublimity of the Theban. He neglected even those forms, the strophe, the antistrophe, and the epode, which even imitative dulness can copy. Sublime imagery, vehement pathos, poetic fire, which constitute the essence of the pindaric ode, are incompatible with witty conceits, accurate antitheses, and vulgar expression. All these imply the coolness of deliberate composition, or the meanness of a little mind; both of them most repugnant to the truly pindaric ode, in which all is rapturous and noble. Wit of any kind would be improperly displayed

played in such composition; but to increase the absurdity, the wit of Cowley is often false.

If the end of poetry is to please, harmony of verse is essential to poetry, for, without it, poetry cannot please. It is not possible, that any whose ear has been attuned to the melody of good composition, should read a single ode of Cowley without being shocked with discord *. There is often nothing left but the jingle at the end, to distinguish poems renowned for their sublimity, from the baldest prose. Such poetry may justly incur the ridiculous title of prose run mad.

Yet is there sometimes interwoven a purple patch, as Horace calls it ; a fine expression, a truly poetical thought, an harmonious couplet ; but it occurs not often enough to repay the reader for the toilsome task of wading through a tedious assemblage of disproportioned and dis-

* Dr. Hurd says, that Cowley had an ear for harmony, but that he formed himself on the model of Donne and Jonson, who affected a rugged and uncouth style.

cordant stanzas. Of such consist his Pindarics; which, though they procured him the greatest share of his reputation, deserved it least. Many of his other poems, if we consider the rude state of versification, and the bad taste of the times, have great merit; and had he made Tibullus his model, instead of Pindar, his claim to the first rank of poets had not been called in question. The tenderness of love, and the soft language of complaint, were adapted to his genius. But he chose to tread in the footsteps of Alcæus*, as he says himself, who, according to the Halicarnassian, combined the *μεγαλοφύες και ηδυ*, or adopted the grand, as well as the sweet.

That he had a taste for Latin poetry, and wrote in it with elegance, the well-known Epitaph on himself, upon his re-

* Alcæus also sometimes mistook his genius; for Quintilian says of him, "In eloquendo brevis et magnificus, plurimumque Homero similis; sed in lusus et amores descendit, majoribus tamen aptior."

tirement,

COWLEY AS A POET.

81

tirement, is a full proof. But, surely, his rhetorical biographer makes use of the figure hyperbole, when he affirms that Cowley has excelled the Romans themselves. He was inferior to many a writer of less fame in the *Musæ Anglicanæ*. But still he had great merit; and I must confess I have read his Latin verses with more pleasure, than any of his English can afford.

But, after all the honours that have been accumulated on his name as a poet, his great merit consisted in his prosaic composition. In this department he is an elegant, a pleasing, a judicious writer. His love of retirement and contemplation qualified him for a moralist; and it is much to be lamented, that he did not devote a greater part of his time to a kind of writing which appeared natural to him, and in which he excelled. The language of his heart shines forth in the little he has left us, and we cannot but love it.

Much more of that language would have descended to posterity, if his friends,

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from a mistaken opinion of propriety, had not suppressed his private letters. Dr. Sprat and Mr. Clifford were avowedly possessed of many ; and the very reason assigned by the biographer, for their suppression, should have operated in their publication. The letters that pass between particular friends, says he, if they are written as they ought to be, that is, I suppose, in an artless manner, can scarcely ever be fit to see the light. How great an injury would polite learning have sustained, if the friends of Cicero had thought like Sprat and Clifford ?

They would better have consulted the reputation of the poet, had they pronounced the Pindarics unfit to see the light. Editors, in general, would act more honourably, in exhibiting only the best of their author's productions, than in praising, as well as publishing, all that has fallen from his pen. But, in truth, to have left out any part of his poems, would, in that age, have been an unpar-

donable omission ; for who should dare to mutilate a Pindar ?

Time, the great arbiter of reputation, has already begun to strip the poet of his borrowed honours. A critic, whose genius and judgment keep pace with each other, and who illuminates every subject on which he treats, has allotted Cowley his just species of praise, and has given the world, in a judicious selection of his works, all that they possessed of real value.

Of these the prose forms a principal part. It is written in a style sufficiently flowing to prove that Cowley was not destitute of a musical ear ; a circumstance which countenances the opinion of those who maintain that he affected a rugged style. Was it a compliance with the taste of the age, that induced him to affect deformity ? Unfortunate compliance with a deplorable taste. He, as well as they whom he imitated, Donne and Jonson, were unquestionably possessed of great learning and ingenuity ; but

they all neglected the graces of composition, and will, therefore, soon be numbered among those once celebrated writers, whose utility now consists in filling a vacant place on the upper shelf of a deserted library.

E S S A Y . VIII.

LETTERS THE SOURCE OF CONSOLATION.

Sunt lachrymæ rerum.

VIRG.

Sunt verba et voces quibus hunc lenire dolorem
Possis.

HOR.

THERE is a great part of mankind, who, without the consolations of philosophy or religion, and without any superior strength of mind, stand up against the evils of life with firmness, and even laugh at those who lament them. Mirth and jollity are able to dissipate the sense of those evils which really exist; but these, alas! presuppose health and plenty, which never yet fell without vicissitude to the lot of any human being.

Pliny the elder has introduced his Natural History of Man, with a very ingenious and pathetic description of the

peculiar evils to which he is born. "Man, says he, "pays dearly, for the noble privileges he enjoys. Nature, a kind parent to other animals, has treated Man with the severity of a step-mother. To her other productions she has given the coverings of shells, barks, skins, hair, feathers, scales, and fleeces. Man she throws naked into the wide world, and bitterly bewailing his arrival in it. The poor lord of the creation lies bound hand and foot, and weeps, and suffers punishment, which he cannot in his own person have deserved. Other animals discover, by the suggestions of instinct, their distinguishing excellence; and know, without instruction, how to display it. Man can do nothing without being taught, and all that Nature has led him to spontaneously, is to weep. He alone is acquainted with grief; he alone is a slave to luxury, to ambition, to avarice, to the fear of death, to superstition. He alone is solicitous about his burial and a future state. The life of no animal is more precarious, no animal is subject to
more

more diseases, in no animal is fear more predominant, or madness more outrageous. In a word, other animals injure not their own species; the savage lion spares his fellow, the serpent bites not the serpent; but most of the evils which fall to the lot of Man are derived to him from his fellow-creature."

Thus writes Pliny; yet to be called into existence, to be furnished with senses capable of pleasure from every object that surrounds us, to be possessed of a mind that delights in contemplation, is so glorious a distinction, so exalted a state, compared with that of the inanimate clod, that one would be almost tempted to think the creature who enjoys it, must spend every hour of its duration in joy and gratitude for the benefit. But the sacred writers, the heathen philosophers, all who have either thought or written with solidity, have agreed that Man is born to trouble, and that few and evil are his days. The moral poet Euripides has said, that, to be a Man is a sufficient plea for being miserable.

Clear as is this truth from the uniform representations of writers, and from the personal experience of every individual that has made any progress in the journey of life, yet if we take a view of the thoughtless votaries of jollity, we shall find every eye sparkling with joy; and from the careless ease displayed in every part of their behaviour, shall almost be tempted to attribute the melancholy description of things, to the mistakes of those who see through the deceitful medium of despondency. Warm with the ebullition of the animal spirits, and agitated by a perpetual round of amusements, they are strangers to those slighter evils which so sensibly affect the delicate, and they give but a momentary attention to real calamity. So pass a few years of pleasing fascination. It is a kind of ominous calm, and presages a tempest. The loss of youth, of health, of associates, of fashion, of influence, converts the boon companion, the fashionable toast, the man of wit and humour,

to a religious devotee, or a melancholy misanthrope.

But, in truth, the kind hand of Providence has scattered flowers as well as thorns in the road of life; and the great skill required, is to select those that are perennial, those that do not bud, blow, and wither in a day, from those that shine with transient lustre, or conceal poisonous qualities under a vivid foliage.

Among the many arguments for a classical and comprehensive education, there is not one that ought to have greater weight, than that it enables those who enjoy the benefit of it, to derive the purest, the sweetest, the most elegant, and the least injurious pleasures from every object that surrounds them. The man of taste and learning creates, as it were, a little world of his own, in which he exercises his faculties; and he feels his most exalted satisfactions arising from things, the existence of which is unknown to the vulgar mind. The Plebeian sends his son to the grammar-school; but he sets but a small value on what he learns there, because

because it has little connection with the arts of gaining or of keeping money; and it is true, that he may receive more advantage from the instructions of the writing-master and the arithmetician. A taste for elegance without a competency is a real misfortune.

But surely, the parent in the middle ranks of life, who is able to place his son above dependence, contributes more to his real happiness, when he gives him a taste for the classics, and for studies which will exalt his nature; than when, by making him a vender of ribbons, he affords him an opportunity of hereafter shining in the envied, but mean magnificence of a lord mayor. To possess thousands with the narrow spirit of a stock-jobber, can add but little real happiness. But to possess a taste for Virgil, with only the necessary comforts and conveniences of life, will confer an elegance and dignity of mind; and will cause a finer pleasure, than was ever felt by a Crassus, or a Clive.

Where, indeed, shall we find objects capable of attaching the mind in every stage
of

of life, in every condition, in every time, in every place, but in the walks of literature? These studies, says Cicero, in a passage which can never be too often repeated, afford nourishment to our youth, delight our old age, adorn prosperity, supply a refuge in adversity, are a constant source of pleasure at home, are no impediment while abroad, attend us in the night-season, and accompany us in our travels and retirements. The great statesman spoke the dictates of his own experience. To his hours of dejection we owe many of his finest philosophical treatises, in the composition of which he awhile forgot his own and his country's calamity.

Deep sorrow is known to seek solitude for indulgence. Company may dissipate the lighter cares, but it appears like mockery to real woe. Add to this, that to mix with company while under the influence of grief, unless it is the company of familiar friends, is a violation of the rules of propriety, since it tends to throw a damp on that cheerfulness, to prompt which society is sought for. But
solitude

solitude invites to reading; and amid the great variety of books, some one may always be found in unison with our own temper. In the retirements of our library, no insolent intruder can upbraid us for disinclination or incapacity to taste convivial enjoyment.

When the prospects which present themselves in the common road of life are dark and dreary, the man of taste can step aside into the elysium of poesy, and tread the flowery paths and view the gilded scenes which fancy raises with the magic enchantment. The ingenious biographer of the poet Gray has informed us, that the most approved productions of his friend were brought forth soon after the death of one whom the poet loved. Sorrow led him to seek for solace of the muse. That the muse smiled on her votary, every reader of taste has already acknowledged. Sacred history has acquainted us with the power of music over the passions, and there is little doubt but the verse as well as the lyre of David, can sooth the troubled spirits to repose.

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It is difficult to be attached to the common objects of human pursuit, without feeling the sordid or the troublesome passions. In the pursuits of learning, all is liberal, noble, generous. They require and promote that comprehensive mode of thinking which overlooks the little and mean occupations of the vulgar mind. To the man of philosophical observation the world appears as a theatre, in which the busy actors toil, and weary themselves, for his amusement. He sees the emptiness of the objects; he is acquainted with the false glitter that surrounds him; he knows how short and unsubstantial are the good and evil that excite all the ardour of pursuit and abhorrence; and can therefore derive a degree of delight from reflection to which they who are deeply, and even successfully interested in them, can never attain. The sordid life and coarse manners of Diogenes were as little laudable as amiable, yet is it probable that his happiness was more constant than that of the turbulent Alexander. Notwithstanding the charms of opulence, yet have Socrates
and

and Epictetus attracted more admirers than the richest publican of Athens and Rome.

It is true, that learning in all its ramifications should be respectively pursued as a qualification for the several professions of civil life; but excluding the motives of interest and ambition, it is to be cultivated for its own sake, by those who understand and wish to enjoy, under every circumstance, the utmost attainable happiness. Next to religion, it is the best and sweetest source of comfort in those hours of dejection, which every mortal must sometimes experience. It constitutes one of the most solid pillars to support the tottering fabric of human felicity, and commonly contributes as much to virtue as to happiness.

E S S A Y IX.

ON ORIENTAL POETRY; PARTICULARLY
THAT OF ISAIAH.

THE productions of the mind, like those of the earth, are found to have different degrees of vigour and beauty in different climates. In the more northern regions, where the nerves are braced by cold, those works are the commonest, and attain to the greatest perfection, which proceed from the exertion of the rational powers, and the painful efforts of the judgment. The sciences, like the hardy pine, flourish on the bleakest mountains; while the works of taste and fancy seem to shrink from the rude blast, with all the tenderness of the sensitive-plant, and to require the genial warmth of a nearer sun to give them their full luxuriance and maturity. Aristotle, Newton, and Locke,
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were the natives and inhabitants of temperate regions. Experience seems to prove, that all the mental powers exist in their greatest degree of strength and perfection among those who inhabit that part of the globe which lies between the tropic of Cancer and the Arctic circle. No complete and celebrated work of genius was ever produced in the torrid zone. But this circumstance must not lead to a conclusion that the inhabitants of the temperate zone excel all others in those faculties which we call imaginative, as well as those which are properly distinguished by the name of intellectual. The few specimens extant of works produced in the eastern and southern climates are remarkable for vigour of fancy, and tend to confirm the opinion, that the warmer regions are favourable to poetical genius, and the colder to the efforts of reason.

But whether the diversity of genius in countries nearer or more remote from the sun proceeds from natural causes, or from the adventitious circumstances of
different

different modes of education, different views, and a different spirit of emulation, it is certain that the productions of Eastern and Northern genius are dissimilar. Some ingenious critics have indeed pointed out a resemblance between the Gothic and Oriental poetry, in the wild enthusiasm of an irregular imagination. And they have accounted for it, by supposing, with great probability, that in the famous emigration of the Asiatics into Scandinavia, they brought with them their national spirit of poetry, and communicated it to the tribes with whom they united. The resemblance therefore in works produced since this union, does not prove that the Northern and Oriental genius were originally alike. Those productions of either which are allowed to be original, and to bear no marks of imitation have perhaps no other resemblance than that which commonly proceeds from the similar operation of the same faculties of the human mind.

It seems, indeed, that a cause may be assigned for this diversity, without attributing

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buting it to an essential difference in the constitution of the mental faculties. The imagination is strongly affected by surrounding objects, and acquires vigour by frequent exercise. He who is placed in a climate where the serenity of the weather constantly presents him with blue skies, luxuriant plantations, and sunny prospects, will find his imagination the strongest of his faculties; and in the expression of his sentiments, will abound in allusions to natural objects, in similes, and in the most lively metaphors. His imagination will be his distinguishing excellence, because it will be more exercised than any other of his faculties; and all the powers both of body and mind are known to acquire vigour by habitual exertion. He, on the other hand, whose lot it is to exist in a less favoured part of the globe, who is driven by the inclemency of his climate to warm roofs, and instead of basking in the sunshine amidst all the combined beauties of nature, flies for refuge from the cold to the blazing

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hearth

hearth of a smoky cottage, will seek in the exercise of his reason, those resources which he cannot find in the actual employment of his imagination. Good sense and just reasoning will therefore predominate in his productions. Even in the wildest of his flights, a methodical plan, the result of thought and reflection, will appear, on examination, to restrain the irregularities of licentious fancy.

Consistently with this theory we find Oriental poetry exhibiting the most picturesque scenes of nature, and illustrating every moral sentiment or argumentative assertion by similies, not indeed exact in the resemblance, but sufficiently analogous to strike and gratify the imagination. Strong imagery, animated sentiment, warmth and vivacity of expression, all of which are the effects of a lively fancy, are its constant characteristics. The accuracy of logic, and the subtlety of metaphysics, are of a nature too frigid to influence the Oriental writer. He feels not the beauty

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of demonstration, he pursues not a chain of argument, and he submits to the force of persuasion, rather from the dictates of his feelings, than from rational conviction. He endeavours to influence his reader in the same manner, and commonly excites an emotion so violent, as to produce a more powerful effect, than would be experienced even from conclusive argumentation.

The Sibylline oracles owed their solemn air, their credit, and their power over the fancy, to the dark and difficult style in which they were composed. Virgil's *Pollio*, supposed to have been written from a hint taken from the books of the Sibyls, is the most admired of his *Eclogues*; and a great share of the pleasure derived from the perusal of it, is justly attributed to the judgment of the poet, in leaving more to be understood than meets the ear. The forebodings of *Cassandra* were not attended to by the *Trojans*; and perhaps the true reason was, that they were not understood. The witches in *Macbeth* add to the terrible solemnity

solemnity of prophetical incantation, by its darkness and uncertainty.

Obscurity seems to have been the characteristic of all writings pretending to prediction. It certainly increased their poetical merit, though, among the Greeks and Romans, it was probably no more than a studied artifice to evade, if the event did not correspond to the prophecy, the imputation of imposture. Thus were the oracles of Apollo delivered in ambiguous phrases which frequently admitted a contrary, always a doubtful, interpretation.

Without this artful proceeding, their authority had not been so long maintained. Frequent failure, without any subterfuge to preserve the prophetical power unsuspected, would soon have silenced the Delphic priestesses. But while the ænigmatical prediction preserved the dignity of the oracle, by inspiring awe, it contributed to its security by facilitating evasion.

The Sacred Prophecies have that obscurity which distinguishes this species

of writing. The final cause of it, however, was to exercise the faith and sagacity of mankind. The beauty which it adds to the poetry, cannot be supposed to arise from design or skill in poetry as an art, but is the incidental result of natural propriety. And none but the unbeliever will suppose that, like the oracles of Delphos, they admitted a doubtful, in order to admit a double construction.

The prophecy of Isaiah abounds in the beauties of Oriental poetry. The translation is a literal one, and though it may be found inaccurate by a Lowth or a Kennicot, will, I believe, hardly admit of improvement in force, simplicity, and animation. It does honour to the feelings of the translators, who, though they have performed their task with so much spirit, had nothing else in view but fidelity. To refinement and taste they made no pretensions; and that their work is so well executed, must have been owing to the excellence of their natural sentiment. We have several literal
translations

translations of the ancient poets into English prose, which are in request among school-boys. In these we find no remains of that beauty which has been celebrated from age to age from its first production. Few of these are rendered so faithfully, word for word, from their originals, as the Scriptures; which, notwithstanding this disadvantage, are the sublimest and most interesting books in the English language.

That they are thus excellent, it may indeed be said, is not to be wondered at. They proceeded from that real inspiration, to which the celebrated writers of antiquity only pretended. And if the enthusiasm, which the imaginary assistance of a fabulous deity excited, could diffuse that captivating spirit over the works of a mortal poet which has charmed every succeeding age, it will be an obvious inference, that the genuine afflatus of the great Author of the universe must produce a work of eminent and unquestionable beauty. Such reasoning is plausible; but, in the present case, it

may not be improper to observe, that the divine inspiration operated intentionally no farther than in dictating truth of representation, and in laying open scenes of futurity; and that the beauties discoverable in the medium of composition, by which those primary ends are accomplished, are but collateral and subordinate effects. Considered as such, every man of sentiment feels them of a superior kind, and if he judges by the criterion of his undissembled feelings, must acknowledge that though they are sometimes resembled in Homer, they are seldom equalled, and never excelled. Consider the poetical beauties merely as the productions of Isaiah, a very ancient poet of Judea, and his writings will surely claim the attention of a man of letters, as much as those of the native of Smyrna or of Asçra.

Those who pretend to an exemption from prejudice, evince the futility of their pretensions, when they attribute the general admiration of the Scriptures, as compositions, to opinions formed in their
favour

favour in the early period of infancy. The truth is, the prejudices which they have unreasonably adopted, against the doctrines derived from those ancient books, extend themselves to the style and sentiment. But, surely, exclusive of the religious tendency, and of the arguments for the authenticity of the books, they claim a great degree of veneration from their antiquity, and justly excite the attention of criticism, as curious specimens of Oriental composition.

It might, indeed, have been expected, from the general taste, which at present prevails for the remains of ancient English poetry, that those works, which justly boast a higher antiquity than any of the productions of North or South Britain, would have been particularly regarded. But, while the ballad of a minstrel, beautiful, perhaps, and well worth preserving, has been recovered from its dust, and committed to memory; the family Bible has been suffered to lie unopened, or has been perused, by many, only with a view to painful improvement,
without

without an idea of the possibility of deriving from it the elegant pleasures of literary entertainment.

This, however, is, in these times, only true of those, whose deficient or ill-conducted education has not improved the principles of taste, which nature has indeed, in some degree, conferred on all, but which commonly lie for ever dormant, or operate perversely, unless excited by favourable opportunities, and directed by judicious discipline. The learned reader has been lately taught to peruse the Sacred Books as classics, which, without the affectation of art, display such beauties as art can but faintly imitate.

Yet even the vulgar often feel the full effect of beauties, which they know not to point out; and are affected with a very strong sense of pleasure, while they are reading the Scriptures solely from motives of duty, and a desire of edification. In truth, among those whose natural taste is not corrupted by false refinement, which perhaps is the most numerous, though not the most distinguished part of the community,

munity, the Bible is read as affording all the delight of pleasing poetry and history; and it may, therefore, justly be said to be the most popular book in the English language.

But the obvious perception of its excellence, among those who are actuated only by the sentiments of nature, while it strongly confirms these remarks, may be thought to supersede their necessity. To this it may be answered, that though it is true, that the more striking excellencies are obvious to every one, yet the more refined and delicate may remain to be pointed out by him, who professedly enters on a critical disquisition of the subject. And they who fully feel and acknowledge the admirable touches of nature and simplicity, which are observable in every page of those writings, will, perhaps, receive additional satisfaction, when they find their taste conformable to classical ideas of literary excellence.

There is, in the present age, a very numerous tribe of readers, who have formed their taste and sentiments from the writings

tings of the philosophers of Geneva, and from the sceptical sophistry of our own countrymen. They are known to make pretensions to a very uncommon degree of refinement, in their judgment of composition ; and to condemn every work, whatever marks it may bear of a strong, though uncultivated genius, which wants the last polish of delicacy and correctness, and has nothing similar to those modern productions, with which alone they have been conversant. With all their boasted comprehension of mind, they seem to want ideas, which may operate as principles in forming a just opinion of those works, which were composed before the invention of systematic rules, and before native sentiment was superseded by the feeble, though elegant, feelings, introduced in a very advanced state of civilization. Under these unfavourable prepossessions, the Bible appears to them as an assemblage of grossness and vulgarisms ; which, therefore, without determining upon the authenticity of it, they avoid reading ; apprehending that
they

they can derive no pleasure from it, and that they may corrupt their style, and catch inelegance.

With these it would be a valuable point gained, for their own sakes as well as for society, if they could be prevailed on so far to lay aside their prejudices, as to open the book, and judge of it from what they feel and remark on a fair examination. If they could once be induced to read it with avidity, from an expectation of literary amusement, they could scarcely fail of receiving, at the same time, a more important benefit.

In an age like the present, when all orders are, in some degree, addicted to letters, he certainly renders great service to religion, and consequently to society, who unites taste with theology, and excites the attention of the careless and sceptical to those books, of which a sense of duty enjoins the perusal, by setting their beauties in a new, or a stronger light.

And that this opinion of the peculiar beauties of Isaiah is not singular, if it is
neces-

necessary to appeal to any other proof than the common feelings of mankind, is evident from the judgment of a popular writer of our own, who, as he was indisputably a poet himself, will be allowed, by the most rigid critics, to be a competent judge of poetry. Mr. Pope's *Messiah* is one of the best known and most esteemed of his shorter works ; but that it derived its chief merit from *Isaiah* there can be no doubt, and the amiable poet felt a pleasure to acknowledge. Unlike the modern pretenders to wit, a friend to religion as well as virtue, he neglected not the opportunity which this pastoral afforded, to form a comparison between *Isaiah* and *Virgil*, in a few parallel passages, fairly exhibited in a translation equally literal, in which the Oriental poet appears to great advantage. There are many parodies, imitations, and paraphrases of this animated prophet's poetry, all which, at the same time that they evince how difficult his excellencies are to be equalled, are proofs that he has been generally admired as a poet.

But,

ON ORIENTAL POETRY. 111

But, after all, the reader must judge of the sacred writings for himself. If he attends to what he feels, and lays aside prepossession, his judgment will be favourable and just. To remove a single prejudice, which can prevent the universal acceptance of books of universal concern, is to contribute greatly to the general happiness. An attempt to render the prophetic writers objects of particular attention, in an age when our most ingenious theologists are employed in illustrating their meaning at a lecture wisely established for that purpose, must, at least, have the merit of being well-timed.

And surely every one who wishes to promote the desirable coalition of taste with piety, must accept, with gratitude, the labours of the venerable Lowth, whose lectures on sacred poetry and observations on Isaiah have displayed, in biblical literature, the unexpected charms of classic elegance.

E S S A Y X.

ON THE PRINCIPLES OF CONVERSATION.

AN appearance of unaffected simplicity, the genuine effect of nature not of study, is the most captivating charm of conversation. It is, however, at the same time true, that, in a great and undistinguishing commerce with mankind, it is often necessary, both for the purposes of affording pleasure, and avoiding inconvenience, to have recourse to a studied and artificial behaviour.

Happy indeed would be our situation, if we could be safe with the innocence of the dove, unmixed with the less amiable qualities of the serpent. But such is the condition of human nature, that the most valuable and lovely dispositions would become an easy prey to the deceitful, if they were not guarded by prudential
maxims

maxims founded on experience. Conversation has, therefore, been very properly reduced to an art, which may be attended to, without losing our integrity, or appearing in a false or assumed character.

One of the first and most important precepts is, to form a just idea of the persons with whom we converse. Their disposition, age, sex, fortune, rank, and character, must be considered with attention. Without such caution, a man of sense and good intentions may give offence to others, and render himself ridiculous.

To excite a good opinion of ourselves, is a laudable object in conversation. But, in the pursuit of it, great address is necessary, to avoid the appearance of a vain, a conceited, a selfish, and an overbearing disposition.

The most effectual methods of raising an opinion of ourselves, without being troublesome to others, have been prescribed by a writer* of a neighbouring na-

* Morhof de Conv. Erud.

tion, from whom some of the following hints were originally adopted.

Let an appearance of openness and honour shine forth in our countenance, our words, our actions. An apparent good disposition attracts the minds of beholders with all the secret and irresistible influence of magnetism. The contrary appearance disgusts and alarms even those who themselves have neither honour nor ingenuoufness. The *volto sciolto*, the open countenance, is the most effectual recommendation, as it speaks a language understood by intuition.

Never disturb those who are seated quietly in the temple of fame. Detraction always implies envy and malevolence; qualities which, though they give rise to conversation that may afford pleasure to the ill-natured, always render their possessor odious, even to his attentive audience. Besides, it is arrogant to controvert the decisions of the majority; and arrogance hurts the pride of our companions too much, to permit us any longer to be agreeable.

Be

OF CONVERSATION. 115

Be modestly ostentatious. To think too highly of ourselves, renders us insupportable; to think too meanly, will tempt the naturally encroaching spirit of mankind to trample upon us. Let us know our rank, and boldly claim it. Let us assume the degree of confidence which our merit may justify*.

Conceal your defects. Caution, says Lord Verulam, must be used to avoid those subjects, on which we are conscious of an incapacity to enlarge. If they arise, pretences must be invented to apologize for our mistakes, and to prove that they proceeded, not so much from want of judgment, as from unavoidable misapprehension. A degree of confidence, says he, must be assumed, to seem to despise what we cannot obtain.

Talk not forwardly on those arts in which you are known to excel. You are admired for your excellence, while the manner in which it was produced and improved is unknown; but point out the steps of your progress, and immediately the wonder ceases.

* *Quæsitam meritis sume superbiam.* Hor.

Avoid the possibility of sinking in the esteem of your company. We are never truly pleased, though perhaps diverted, with what we despise.

Never give a moment's uneasiness either by word or deed. Take the world as you find it, and conform as far as you innocently can with its absurdities. You may be disgusted if you please with your companions, but what will it avail? It will give yourself pain, and render you an object of hatred and revenge.

Acquire a versatility of mind, which will enable you to accommodate your own temper and manners to those of the persons with whom you converse.

Avoid a contradicting and disputatious turn. Opposition always occasions a momentary enmity. And no man can be an agreeable companion who requires proofs and arguments for every assertion which may drop in the carelessness of easy conversation.

Be universally affable. An engaging countenance, an inviting air, a soothing voice, carry with them irresistible allurements.

ments. Many possessed of solid merit and amiable dispositions have been but indifferently received in the world, because they have contracted, by intense thought or some other cause, a severity of feature.

Garrulity is intolerable persecution. Reserve and excessive silence are disagreeable, but far less so than immoderate talkativeness, because they suffer the indulgence of one's own thoughts; but the impertinence of the garrulous man forces attention without repaying it.

Any remarkable degree of curiosity is to be avoided. It not only gives pain to others, but defeats its own purpose; for he who finds himself solicitously questioned, suspects that there is some particular reason for enquiry, places himself on his guard, and refuses or evades an answer to the most unimportant interrogations.

A decisive and magisterial manner is always disgusting. The very same opinion which, when proposed with becoming diffidence, is adopted; when of-

ferred with an air of insolence, meets with contempt and rejection.

It is a mistake which some men of learning have fallen into, that when they are in company it is necessary to say something striking and remarkable. It is not so much required that they should display ingenuity on extraordinary subjects, as that they should talk on common affairs with ease, with good-humour, and without affectation. I have seen the enjoyment of an evening interrupted by some profound yet judicious remark, which has made all the company stare, and caused an universal silence.

A good heart, and a good understanding, will learn, after a little converse with the world, to behave, if not in an attractive, yet in an inoffensive manner. They may err in matters of form ; but their very errors will be amiable, because they will arise from unaffected simplicity, and will be accompanied with diffidence. But the errors of the vain, the forward, and the assuming, however they may be born with through pity or politeness, are always despised and hated.

E S S A Y XI.

ON THE GRAVE AND GAY PHILOSOPHY.

THE world has ever been viewed by men of different dispositions in a light totally different. The thoughtful and melancholy have represented it as a vale of misery; the gay and the volatile, as a theatre abounding with delightful entertainments, if the spectators are but in good humour. The whole difference indeed, it has been said, arises from the various state of the minds of men, and not from any inconsistent diversity in the constitution of things. It would therefore seem probable that the greater part would embrace the more agreeable side, from motives of self-interest and gratification. But the

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truth

truth is, there are as many followers of Heraclitus as of Democritus.

That there is an essential difference in the original form of minds, there is no doubt; and to this cause is to be attributed that some are gloomy, others cheerful. But habit is often no less concerned than nature. For it is remarkable that, among moral writers, those who have enjoyed wealth and the company of the great; and who consequently partook of various pleasures, have commonly chosen the comfortable kind of philosophy; while they who were oppressed by want, and excluded from enjoyment, have no less naturally represented life, such as they found it, as a state of misery interrupted only by short-lived and unsubstantial gratifications.

The English nation is characteristically grave, and of course the graver kind of philosophy has been much cultivated in England. There are few books that please more generally than the *Night Thoughts* of Young. Hervey's *Meditations* are more frequently read than many
works

works of humour, and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* has given as much pleasure among the English vulgar, as the *Quixote* of Cervantes.

But our increase of wealth and our imitation of French and Asiatic manners, have greatly altered our natural disposition. We begin to relish none but the gayer kind of philosophy. Horace, were he English, would at present be more read than Juvenal, and Lucian than Seneca.

Every admirer of fine composition and of solid sense must be delighted with the *Rambler*; and yet it is said, that the *World*, and other less solid performances, are now more universally read and approved. It must indeed be confessed, that, besides some affectations, which justly give offence, those excellent papers induce a melancholy by no means compatible with the true enjoyment of life. They inspire virtuous sentiments, but they depress those spirits which are necessary to put them in practice.

The philosophy of Epicurus is the philosophy adopted by the greater part,
most

most of whom embrace his tenets without having heard of his name. The truth is, human nature is naturally inclined to pursue pleasure, and to avoid all that has the appearance of wretchedness and woe. Even they who devote themselves to melancholy find a pleasure in it; a pleasure scarcely recognized by the gay and luxurious, but yet real and satisfactory.

Seneca and Antoninus are severe moralists. They exhibit life in its less pleasing aspects, and exact duties not to be performed without painful efforts. But they call forth the latent powers of the mind, and by requiring an exertion beyond the natural strength, really compel it to effect all that it is able. Indolence prevents men in general from effecting all that they are able. The pleasurable system dissuades them from the attempt. And if there were not some austere instructors and some faithful followers of them, there would not be active virtue enough in a community to preserve its existence.

In

In the earlier periods of society the severe philosophy is most cultivated. For then virtuous exertions are most necessary, and luxurious indulgences precluded. Success, and increase in wealth and glory, are the usual consequence. Luxury succeeds in a course as certain in all its stages as any physical process. A taste for a light, cheerful, fanciful philosophy, soon explodes the fullen precepts of rigid moralists. Manners are relaxed, and naturally bring on a declension of empire. At least all regard for liberty is lost; and the mind, enervated with pleasure, gladly sinks in the repose of despotism.

It is evident that in our own country, the severer philosophy loses ground. This, among many others, is a symptom of corruption, and the harbinger of decay. An imitation of French manners has greatly accelerated this revolution in our sentiments. And, after all, it is a forced and unnatural change; for an Englishman, whether from the influence of climate, or some cause inherent in his constitution, is by nature grave, and disposed

posed to admit manly thoughts and to practice manly actions.

The influence of books on the national manners of a community, almost every member of which devotes some part of his time to reading, must be important. And among other methods which might be used to excite the spirit of patriotism and political virtue, it might be proper to attempt to restore a taste for solid and severe morality, and to ridicule those light, superficial, sentimental, and affected productions, which, while they please the sickly mind, encrease its imbecillity.

ESSAY XII.

ON THE PLEASURES OF A GARDEN.

Mihi parva rura.

HOR.

God first planted a garden, and indeed of all human pleasures, that of a garden is the purest. BAC.

—nec vos, dulcissima mundi

Nomina, vos, Musæ, Libertas, Otia, Libri,
Hortique, Sylvæque, animâ remanente, relin-
quam. COWLEY.

NOT he alone is to be esteemed a benefactor to mankind, who makes an useful discovery; but he also, who can point out and recommend an innocent pleasure. Of this kind are the pleasures arising from the observation of nature; and they are highly agreeable to every taste uncorrupted by vicious indulgence.

There will always be many in a rich and civilized country, who, as they are born to the enjoyment of competent estates, engage not in business civil or profes-

professional. But the restless mind must either find or make an object. Pleasure, therefore, becomes, to the unemployed, a serious pursuit. Whatever is its essence, and whatever the declaimer may urge against it, pleasure will be sought by all who possess the liberty of election. It becomes then incumbent on the moralist, not only to urge the performance of duty, but to exhibit objects that please without enervating the mind, and gratify desire without corrupting the principles.

Rural scenes, of almost every kind, are delightful to the mind of man. The verdant plain, the flowery mead, the meandering stream, the playful lamb, the warbling of birds, are all capable of exciting the gently agreeable emotions. But the misfortune is, that the greater part are hurried on in the career of life with too great rapidity to be able to give attention to that which solicits no passion. The darkest habitation in the dirtiest street of the metropolis, where money can be earned, has greater charms, with many, than the groves of Hagley.

Yet the patron of refined pleasure, the elegant Epicurus, fixed the seat of his enjoyment in a garden. He thought a tranquil spot, furnished with the united sweets of art and nature, the best adapted to delicate repose. And even the severer philosophers of antiquity were wont to discourse in the shade of a spreading tree, in some cultivated plantation.

It is obvious, on intuition, that nature often intended solely to please the eye. She decorates the flowret, that springs beneath our feet, in all the perfection of external beauty. She has clothed the garden with a constant succession of various hues. Even the leaves of the tree undergo a pleasing vicissitude. The fresh verdure they exhibit in the spring, the various shades they assume in summer, the yellow and russet tinge of autumn, and the nakedness of winter, afford a constant pleasure to a picturesque imagination. From the snow-drop to the moss-rose, the flower-garden displays an infinite variety of shape and colour. The taste of the florist has been ridiculed as trifling;

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trifling; yet, surely, without reason. Did nature bring forth the tulip and the lily, the rose and the honeysuckle, to be neglected by the haughty pretender to superior reason? To omit a single social duty for the cultivation of a polyanthus, were ridiculous as well as criminal; but to pass by the beauties lavished before us, without observing them, is no less ingratitude than stupidity. A bad heart finds little amusement but in a communication with the active world where scope is given for the indulgence of malignant passions; but an amiable disposition is commonly known by a taste for the beauties of the animal and the vegetable world.

The northern countries of Europe are not the best adapted to the natural delights of rural scenery. Our vernal seasons, which the poets celebrate in all the luxuriance of description, are commonly rendered cold and uncomfortable, by the long continuance of an eastern wind. Our poets borrowed their ideas of a spring from the poets of Italy, who collected

lected theirs from nature. A genial day in April, is among us the subject of general congratulation. And, while the lilac blossoms, and the laburnum drops its golden clusters, the shivering possessor of them is constrained to seek warmth at the side of his chimney. Yet, from the temperature of our climate we derive a beauty unknown in the gardens of a warmer country. Few objects are more pleasing than the smooth lawn; but the soft verdure, which constitutes its beauty, is not to be found in more southern climates. It is certainly true, that the rarity of our truly vernal weather, like that of other delights, increases the pleasure of it; and it is probable, for this reason, that an Englishman, notwithstanding his complaints against his atmosphere, enjoys the pleasures of a garden in their full perfection. A fine day, says Temple, is a kind of sensual pleasure; but surely it would cease to be such, if every day were fine.

A practical attention to a garden, by many, is esteemed degrading. It

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is true, that pastoral and agricultural manners, if we may believe the dignified descriptions of Virgil, are greatly degenerated. The employments of shepherds and husbandmen are now mean and sordid. The care of the garden is left to a peasant. Nor is it unreasonable to assign the work, which wearies without amusement, to those, who are sufficiently amused by the prospect of their wages. But the operations of grafting*, of inoculating, of pruning, of transplanting, are curious experiments in natural philosophy; and, that they are pleasing as well as curious, those can testify, who remember what they felt on seeing their attempts succeed.

Among the employments suitable to old age, Cicero has enumerated gardening. It requires no great exertion of mind or body; and its satisfactions are of that kind which please without agitation. Their beneficial in-

* *Cujus quidem non utilitas me solum, ut antedixi, sed etiam cultura et ipsa natura delectat.—Nec confectiones modo delectant, sed etiam INSITIONES, quibus nihil invenit agricultura solertius. CIC.*

fluence on health, is an additional reason for an attention to them at an age when infirmities abound.

In almost every description of the seats of the blessed, ideas of a garden seem to have predominated. The word Paradise itself is synonymous with garden. The fields of Elysium †, that sweet region of poesy, are adorned with all that imagination can conceive to be delightful. Some of the most pleasing passages of Milton are those in which he represents the happy Pair engaged in cultivating their blissful abode. Poets have always been delighted with the beauties of a garden. Lucan is represented by Juvenal as reposing in his garden. Virgil's Georgics prove him to have been captivated with rural scenes; though, to the surprise of his readers, he has not assigned a book to the subject of a garden. Our

† Surgunt per agros undique roscidos
Flores amicti mille coloribus,
Solique gemmas explicantes,
Dulce nitent radiante vultu.

JORTIN ex Pind.

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Shenstone made it his study; but, with all his taste and fondness for it, he was not happy in it. The captivating scenes which he created at the Leasowes, afforded him, it is said, little pleasure in the absence of spectators. The truth is, he made the embellishment of his grounds, which should have been the amusement of his life, the business of it; and involved himself in such troubles, by the expences it occasioned, as necessarily excluded tranquil enjoyment.

It is the lot of few to possess territories like his, sufficiently extensive to constitute an ornamented farm. Still fewer are capable of supporting the expence of preserving it in good condition. But let not the rich suppose they have appropriated the pleasures of a garden. The possessor of an acre, or a smaller portion, may receive a real pleasure, from observing the progress of vegetation, even in a culinary plant. A very limited tract, properly attended to, will furnish ample employment for an individual. Nor let it be thought a mean care; for the same
hand

hand that raised the cedar, formed the hyssop on the wall. Even the orchard, cultivated solely for advantage, exhibits beauties unequalled in the shrubbery; nor can the green-house produce an appearance to match the blossom of the apple and the almond.

Amusement reigns, says Dr. Young, man's great demand. Happy were it, if the amusement of managing a garden were more generally relished. It would surely be more conducive to health, and the preservation of our faculties to extreme old age, were that time which is now devoted to the dice and to the card-table, spent in the open air, and in active employment.

“ I spent the time which my compani-
“ ons allotted to rural amusements, in
“ examining those repositories of ancient
“ learning, the public libraries. I saw
“ indeed the futility of scholastic logic,
“ but a desire to qualify myself for the
“ public exercises, led me to the at-
“ tentive perusal of Wallis and Saun-
“ derfon. The same motive engaged
“ me in the dreary subtilties of meta-
“ physics. Such studies engrossed the
“ greater part of my first three years,
“ with little advantage and no plea-
“ sure. The fatigue would have been
“ intolerable, had it not sometimes been
“ alleviated by the charms of poetry.
“ My favourite Virgil and Horace, and
“ every polite writer of modern times,
“ afforded, in their turn, an agreeable
“ recreation. My exercises were ho-
“ nourably distinguished, and praise to
“ an ingenuous mind is the best reward
“ of learned labours.

“ With my character for application
“ and sobriety, not to boast of my at-
“ tainments, I found no difficulty in
“ obtaining

“ obtaining orders. The head of my
“ house procured me a curacy in a small
“ country town. Thither I went, not
“ without my collection of books, the
“ use of which I would not have fore-
“ gone for a mitre. I had no other wish
“ than to improve myself in learning,
“ and to perform the duty of an eccle-
“ siastic with decency and devotion.
“ I was happy in the prospect of spend-
“ ing my time uninterrupted by the
“ intrusion of my academical friends,
“ whom youth and high spirits would
“ often lead to a noisy behaviour little
“ consistent with meditation. My want
“ of experience concealed from me
“ the difficulty of pursuing the line of
“ conduct which inclination pointed
“ out. I found it was necessary to my
“ good reception among my parish-
“ ioners, to give up the greatest part
“ of the day to a participation in their
“ amusements. In vain was it that I
“ laboured to excel in the pulpit.
“ There was not a man in the place
“ who had an idea of the dignity or
“ utility

“ utility of literary excellence, and
“ who would not most cordially have
“ hated even a Clarke or a Tillotson, if
“ he had never been in at the death of
“ a hare, nor drank his bottle at the
“ club. The parson, in their idea of
“ his character, was a jolly fellow in
“ black, who was to lead a careless life
“ all the week, and preach against it on
“ Sundays. I could not bring myself
“ to take delight in a fox-chace, and
“ though good-nature prevented me
“ from shewing my dislike, I could ne-
“ ver meet any of the hunters with
“ satisfaction. The little pleasure I
“ took in the only society that was to
“ be obtained, still farther confirmed
“ me in my recluse mode of life. When
“ my resolution appeared unchangeable,
“ I was suffered to live as I pleased,
“ with the character of an odd, but
“ inoffensive man. In this unmolested
“ retreat, I found time to go through
“ a complete course of ecclesiastical
“ history. I acquired a sufficient know-
“ ledge of the oriental languages to enable
“ me

“ me to read the Polyglott. I wrote
“ a great number of sermons and
“ theological treatises, and made many
“ corrections in the vulgar translation
“ of the Bible. So wholly engrossed
“ was I by my darling pursuits, that I
“ seldom left my chamber. In vain
“ did the vernal sun invite. The mu-
“ sic of a pack of hounds, which fre-
“ quently passed my window, had no
“ charms in my ears. The rural sports
“ of every kind were tedious and in-
“ sipid. To my books I returned from
“ every trifling avocation, with re-
“ doubled pleasure, and endeavoured
“ to repay the loss of an hour in the
“ day, by devoting a great portion of
“ the night to study.

“ It is really true, that my chief mo-
“ tive for application was a love of
“ learning. Yet I will be so ingenuous
“ as to own, I sometimes formed a wish,
“ that my small share of merit, if I
“ had any, might attract the notice of
“ my superiors. There is a time of
“ life when fame alone appears to be
“ an

“ an inadequate reward of great labour.
“ It flatters that natural love of distinction which we all possess, but it furnishes no convenience in the time of want and infirmity. There was in the neighbourhood a little living of one hundred a year, with a house and garden, in a style of decent elegance which becomes a scholar. The patron was the esquire of the next parish, who had always treated me with singular respect. I was foolish enough to suppose his regard for my character would induce him to bestow his benefice on me, but I found when it became vacant, he had staked and lost the next presentation at a game at whist with a clerical fox-hunter.
“ I was at last taken notice of by my diocesan. He had heard of my indefatigable diligence, and recommended me to an eminent publisher, as a proper person to make an index to a very voluminous work. I eagerly undertook the task, with a view to please so great a man, and finished it in less than
“ a year

“ a year and a half. The books were
“ printed on a small letter, and this
“ work did my eyes an injury which they
“ will never recover; but it must be owned,
“ on the other hand, that the bookseller
“ gave me in return a bank note of
“ ten pounds. An index author seldom
“ acquires reputation. He is indeed
“ seldom known, but if he happens to
“ be discovered, the accuracy of his
“ work, is in the opinion of many, a dis-
“ grace to him. It seems to argue a
“ degree of phlegmatic dulness, rarely
“ in the power of genius. It will not
“ therefore be thought wonderful that
“ this laborious work produced no other
“ effect than the injury of my eyes, and
“ the payment of my taylor’s bill.

“ In this curacy I still continue, with-
“ out any prospect of change, unless
“ when blindness, occasioned by inter-
“ perate study or the infirmities of age,
“ shall oblige me to resign. I am not
“ of a discontented disposition, nor do I
“ relate my condition with a design to
“ criminate others for their neglect of
“ me.

“ me. Preferment I never sought by
“ those methods which the world agrees
“ to be the best suited to procure it.
“ I have therefore no right to complain
“ of the want of that which I did not
“ pursue. My motive for this commu-
“ nication is to prevent others from in-
“ curring misery by a too great attach-
“ ment to objects laudable in them-
“ selves. I can never discountenance
“ an attention to literature. I still love
“ it. I still venerate those that have
“ excelled in it. But a sincere regard
“ for the most amiable and useful of my
“ species, induces me to remind them,
“ that they have a body which requires
“ a great share of their attention, and
“ that no satisfaction arising from study
“ can ultimately counterbalance the loss
“ of sight, and that long train of ner-
“ vous diseases superinduced by unre-
“ mitted application.

“ I mean not to excite your sympathy;
“ nor will I exaggerate my evils by de-
“ scription. My appearance has al-
“ ready convinced you that I am the
“ victim

“ victim of disease. Nor will you hesitate to believe that the stone, the gout, the hypochondria, which have worn out my tender frame, were derived from an attention unrelieved by the usual and necessary relaxations. Had I been wise enough to have mounted a horse during the intervals of reading, and to have entered into cheerful company at the close of a thoughtful day, I might have prolonged my favourite enjoyments to a happy old age.

“ I am philosopher enough to bear with patience a condition which I cannot alter, yet I sometimes think, though without the least degree of envy, that an old school-fellow of mine, of a very different turn from myself, is far happier. I remember I used to laugh at him, and think him very silly, when, at the time we were at the University together, he used to miss an ingenious lecture for the sake of a ride, and spend the three shillings, with which I should have bought a

“ book,

“ book, in the hire of a horse. It is
“ true, indeed, that he need not, and
“ ought not, to have neglected his men-
“ tal improvement, because he had
“ many opportunities of relaxation after
“ the hours of study were elapsed. Yet
“ if I judge of his conduct by the ap-
“ parent effects of it at present, it ap-
“ pears to me in a less blameable light
“ than it used to do. He is now at the
“ age of sixty-three, for he was some-
“ what older than myself, and retains
“ all the vigour and alertness of a young
“ man. His countenance is hale, his
“ limbs muscular, and he reads the service
“ and the news-paper, the only things
“ he does read, without spectacles.

“ He set out in life as friendless as
“ myself. He engaged in a curacy in a
“ sporting country. His love of field-
“ diversions soon introduced him to what
“ was called the best company. He
“ possessed the external graces of beha-
“ viour, and at the same time was deeply
“ skilled in horse-flesh, and had Brac-
“ ken's Farriery by heart. Such merits
“ could

“ could not long pass unrewarded. A
“ baronet in the neighbourhood grew
“ fond of him, and introduced him to his
“ family; one of whom was an only
“ daughter, of no great personal or
“ mental accomplishments. My friend,
“ however, admired her fortune, and
“ found no difficulty in obtaining her
“ hand. The living on which he now
“ resides was part of her portion, and
“ though of no great value, yet it fur-
“ nishes him with a pretty snug sporting-
“ box. He commonly reads prayers in
“ his boots and spurs, while his hunter
“ stands neighing in the porch till honest
“ Moses has twanged through his nose
“ the joyful Amen. It is true, my old
“ friend has no taste, no learning, no
“ refinement, but he has the use of his
“ eyes, and a never-ceasing flow of
“ spirits; he can walk as well as ever,
“ has an excellent digestion, and plenty to
“ furnish it with constant employment.”

“ But his example is not to be fol-
“ lowed, since he has run into an ex-
“ treme, more culpable, though less per-

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“ nicious

146 STORY OF A STUDENT.

“ nicious to himself, than mine is to me.
“ Far happier and wiser the philosophical
“ Euphranor, who, with the warmest af-
“ fection for learning, restrained it, as he
“ has every other inordinate attachment,
“ by the rules of prudence; and by pay-
“ ing all the attention which nature and
“ reason require, to his body and to his
“ mind, has advanced them both to the
“ highest degree of possible perfection.”

E S S A Y XIV.

ON SATIRE AND SATIRISTS.

THE good reception which that species of Poetry called Satire has commonly met with in the world, is perhaps owing to some dispositions in human nature, not the most amiable. It derives not its power of pleasing, like other poetry, from its effect on the imagination. It raises no enchanting prospects; it is not necessarily employed in fiction. A spirit of indignation is its essential principle, and by causing a similar spirit in the reader, it gently gratifies the irascible passions.

It must be owned, that it has seldom answered its ostensible end of reforming the age. Yet allowing it to be of

little use, it is often composed with such evident marks of genius as renders it interesting to men of taste. And though spleen may have given rise to its first production, and the love of censure ensured its success, yet the beauties of the composition will cause it to be read, even by those who disapprove personal invective, long after the resentment that occasioned it has subsided.

The origin of Satire has caused much controversy among the learned. The etymology of the name has employed, to very little purpose, the time and sagacity of such scholars as Vossius, Dacier, Scaliger, and Casaubon*.

Its history, like all other histories, when traced too high, becomes obscure. But Horace has said, (and who can pretend to a knowledge of the subject equal to his?) that Lucilius was the first that wrote just and legitimate Satire. The writers who preceded him were sufficiently pointed, but their productions were irre-

* The idea of the *lanx satura* seems to be generally received.

gular and incorrect, illiberal in their sentiments, and scurrilous in their language.

Horace, the politest writer whom the world ever produced, adopted satirical writing, and succeeded in it, though there is every reason to believe his natural disposition was not severe. The truth is, he was a man of the world, as well as a man of reflection, and wrote his remarks on men and things in careless verse; not without censuring them indeed, but without indulging asperity. He probed every wound with so gentle a hand, that the patient smiled under the operation. The gay friend of Mæcenas had lived in courts, and knew too much of the world to think he could reform it by severity.

Not so the stern Juvenal. With all the warmth of a zealot in the cause of virtue, he pours his majestic verse, and, amid the most spirited invective and fine morality, emits many a luminous irradiation of beautiful descriptive poetry.

His predecessor Persius had afforded him a noble model. He improved on it in

nothing but perspicuity. Persius is all fire, spirit, animation. The frequency of his interrogations rouses the attention of the reader, and it is not easy to read and understand him without catching the glow with which he evidently wrote. If his obscurity arose from fear, it does not indeed depreciate his merit as a writer; but it has caused him to be less read and admired than he deserves. The last lines of his second Satire are alone sufficient to entitle him to immortality*.

The English seem to have copied the manner of Juvenal rather than of Horace. Our national spirit is indeed of the manly and rough kind, and feels something congenial with itself in the vehemence of the fullen Juvenal.

The Roman is remarkably harmonious. But Donne, his imitator, seems to have

* *Quin damus id superis, de magna quod dare lance
Non possit magni Messalæ lippa propago;
Compositum jus, fasque animo: sanctosque recessus
Mentis et incoctum generoso pectus honesto.*

thought

thought a roughness of verse, as well as of sentiment, a real grace. It is scarcely possible, that a writer who did not studiously avoid a smooth versification, could have written so many lines without stumbling on a good one. Pope has revived his fame by attuning his harsh numbers; a work whose very excellence makes us regret that a genius so fertile as was the bard's of Twickenham, should have wasted its vigour in paraphrases and translations.

This versatile poet has imbibed the very spirit of Horace. Nor can the mere English reader obtain, by the translations of Creech or of Francis, so clear and adequate an idea of the true Horatian manner, as from the liberal imitations of Pope.

Dryden seems to have preferred the model of his favourite Juvenal. His nervous line was well adapted to satire. He says himself, "he could write severely, " with more ease than he could write " gently." His *Abſalom* and *Achitophel*, and his *MacFlecknoe*, are master-

pieces in the serious and vehement kind of Satire.

Boileau seems to have blended with judgment the manner of Horace and Juvenal. Whatever degree of elegance he possesses, the natural monotony of French verse tires an ear accustomed to the various harmony of our English poets. The French language never appears so meanly as in the heroic couplet. He who reads the *Henriade*, and happens to think of Milton, Dryden, Garth, or Pope, must close the volume with all the loathing of disgust. He who reads Boileau, will find his improving imitator Pope rise in his opinion. Pope rouses the attention by all the changes of musical modulation; Boileau soothes it to dull repose by the lullaby of similar pauses constantly repeated.

A poet of our own, little attended to at present, once enjoyed a very high degree of fame as a satirical writer. Oldham has been called the English Juvenal. His satire on the Jesuits has indeed much of the spirit of Juvenal. It displays
wit,

wit, force, pungency, and a véry copious invention; but it is no less distinguished by a coarseness and vulgarity, which must prevent Oldham from keeping his place among the classics of our country. He has lashed the Jesuits with deserved and unrelenting rigour; but though severe punishment is often necessary, yet to see it inflicted without mercy, is not agreeable. There are some works of poetry as well as of painting, which, though well executed as pieces of art, lose the praise their excellence demands, by the shocking nature of their representations.

A later satirist, Dr. Young, is still read with pleasure. But he has the fault of Seneca, of Ovid, of Cowley; a profusion and an unseasonable application of wit. His satires have been justly called a string of epigrams. A lover of originality, he did not regard models. Had he endeavoured to imitate Juvenal or Persius, he would have avoided this fault. Those great masters were too much engrossed by the importance of their subjects to fall into the puerility of witticism.

There is also something in Young's versification which a good ear does not approve.

But even Young, popular as he was, has been eclipsed by a poet who has shone with the effulgence and the instability of a meteor. Churchill possessed merit; a merit which was magnified when seen through the medium of party, beyond that degree which it was able to support. When reason at last viewed what passion had exaggerated, she was disgusted with the disappointment, and turned away with neglect. Thus the celebrated Churchill, with whose applause the town re-echoed, is sinking to an oblivion which he hardly deserves; for though he wrote many careless lines and many dull passages, yet the greater part of his productions displayed a genuine vein of satirical genius.

Within a few years Satire has re-assumed her original rude form of scurrilous and petulant abuse. An improved versification has given a gloss to the most illiberal invectives. An undaunted effrontery, recommended by tolerable rhymes, has
sup-

supplied the want of every classical and noble ornament. That it has been well received, is no proof of its solid excellence as composition, since to the greater part of readers, the abuse which it lavishly pours on public and private characters, is a sufficient recommendation.

It differs from classical Satire in this, as well as other circumstances. Horace, Persius, Juvenal, abound with the finest moral sentiments. They not only put vice to shame, but countenanced virtue, and pointed out the way to attain to it. But the satirists of our times seem to have little else in view, than to gratify private pique, or party-prejudice. It is indeed scarcely to be expected that in a degenerate age, many will be found to possess dignity of character and solidity of judgment, in a degree sufficient to enable them to stand forth as disinterested censors of prevailing manners,

E S S A Y XV.

ON PREACHING AND SERMON WRITERS.

FEW institutions can contribute more to preserve civilization, and promote moral and intellectual improvement among all ranks of people, than the establishment of public lectures, in every part of the kingdom, periodically repeated after a short interval.

Such is the light in which the discourses appointed by the wisdom of the church, to be every where held on the recurrence of the seventh day, are to be considered. By these the meanest and the most illiterate are enabled to hear moral and philosophical treatises on every thing that concerns their several duties, without expence, and without sollicitation.

And whatever is urged by men, who are ill-affected to all ecclesiastical establishments,

blishments, there is no doubt but that great political, as well as moral, benefit is derived to society, from a practice thus universal. But it is a misfortune long ago lamented, that men are incapable of estimating the real value of advantages, till experience has shewn what it is to want them.

It is certainly true, that since the acquisition of books has been facilitated by their numbers, oral instruction is rendered less necessary. But though books are easily procured, yet even in this age of information, there are thousands in the lower classes who cannot read. Besides, it is a well known truth, that the same precepts inculcated by a living instructor, adorned by a proper oratory, enforced by a serious and authoritative manner, produce a powerful effect, not to be experienced in solitary retirement. There is likewise a sympathy communicated in a numerous audience, which attaches the mind more strongly to the speaker.

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The obvious utility of discourses from the pulpit is proved by the decisions of experience. For, notwithstanding the complaints against the levity and profaneness of the age, churches are still frequented with apparent pleasure. And to be placed in a situation where a good preacher presides, is by many esteemed a very essential requisite to an agreeable retreat.

For excellent preachers this nation has been long distinguished; excellent, not so much in the talents of an orator, as in the composition of discourses. With an uncultivated voice, in an uncouth manner, accompanied with awkward attitudes, they have delivered harangues unequalled in the schools of Athens. As the French have exhibited their characteristic levity even in their boasted sermons; so the English have displayed their characteristic solidity.

The sermons of the last century are indeed too long for the attention of modern indolence, but they abound with beauty that would reward it. Jeremy Taylor
possessed

possessed an invention profusely fertile ; a warm, rich, lively imagination; a profound knowledge of authors, sacred and profane, poetical, historical, philosophical. He has embellished his sermons with citations from them, and has interwoven their gold into the rich tissue of his fine composition. When the little tarnish which they have contracted through time, is removed by the skilful modernizer, there are few sermons in the language equal to those of this prodigy of parts and learning. Perhaps the juvenile preacher would act more judiciously in using the abbreviated discourses of such divines, than in venturing to produce his own less mature lucubrations.

Nearly at the same time with Taylor arose Isaac Barrow; a mighty genius, whose ardour was capable of accomplishing all it undertook. The tide of his eloquence flows with smooth yet irresistible rapidity. He treats his subject with mathematical precision, and never leaves it till he has exhausted it. It has been said, that a late most popular orator in
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the House of Lords asserted, that he owed much of the fire of his eloquence to the study of Barrow.

His editor, Tillotson, is more popular. His merit is unquestionably great, and his fame has been extended to very exalted heights by the praises of Addison. He writes with sufficient judgment and perspicuity; but there are those who venture to suggest, that he has been too much celebrated as a model of fine composition. They allow him every praise as a most excellent divine; but when they consider him as a writer, they think his periods might have been shorter, and his rhythm more harmonious.

Of a very different character, South has obtained a great and deserved reputation. Wit was his talent, yet he often reaches sublimity. He is, however, one of those authors who is to be admired and not imitated. To excite a laugh from the pulpit, is to inspire the hearer with a levity of temper ill-adapted to the indulgence of devotional feelings. The taste of the age in which South flourished

~~flourished~~ countenanced pulpit jocularly. But though the lovers of comedy have found their taste gratified in the perusal of South's sermons, yet the man of serious judgment will discover many solid arguments, and many judicious observations, intermixed with prosaic epigrams.

The sagacious Clarke pretended not to wit. He affected not the ambitious ornaments of rhetoric. He rarely reaches the sublime, or aims at the pathetic; but in a clear, manly, flowing style, he delivers the most important doctrines, confirmed on every occasion by well-applied passages from scripture. If he was not a shining orator, according to the ideas of rhetoricians, he was a very agreeable as well as useful preacher. He was not orthodox in his opinions; a circumstance which has lowered his character among many. Certain it is, that he would have done more good in the world, had he confined his labours to practical divinity. Speculative and polemical divinity commonly diffuses scepticism, without con-

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tributing

tributing any thing to moral reformation.

The sermons that have been preached at Boyle's Lectures are some of the best argued in the language. They have been the laboured productions of the most ingenious men. But the whole collection never did so much good as a single practical discourse of Tillotson.

Atterbury was a polite writer. His sermons probably owed some of their fame, among his contemporaries, who have lavishly applauded him, to his mode of delivery in the pulpit; for the Tatler says, it was such as would have been approved by a Longinus and Demosthenes. He seems to have introduced the very judicious method of addressing the understanding in the beginning, and the passions at the close of the sermon.

Rogers, says his panegyrist Dr. Burton, possessed an eloquence, nervous, simple, persuasive, and beautiful. An unstudied elegance marked his style. He seems to have attained to that nice judgment, which adapted the same discourse

country, a rustic, a city, an academical congregation. In a professed elogium it is indeed allowable to exaggerate, yet what Burton has advanced is confirmed by a perusal of the sermons of Rogers. They are perspicuous, solid, and written with remarkable ease.

Of all the late sermon writers, Seed is the most popular. With a rich and sportive fancy he combined a solid judgment. Unlike the generality of those writers who affect to be flowery, he abounds in sound argument, and in just remarks on human life. A severe critic would condemn him for a profusion of embellishment; but I know not how it is, he had the skill to give repeated pleasure without satiety.

Such are the more popular of our English sermon-writers, the models of those many divines, who with very great merit do not possess the reputation of originality. To enumerate them all were an endless task; for of no books in the English language has there been so unceasing a succession, as of sermons.

Of late there have appeared publications of sermons addressed to persons of particular ages. Though some of these have exhibited a highly florid eloquence, and were received with great applause, yet they were too much ornamented, and, like many kinds of food, possessed a sweetness which delights for a moment, but soon terminates in loathing. They amused the imagination, and sometimes touched the heart; but they left little employment to the understanding.

Sermons which came forth with less eclat, will stand a better chance of descending to posterity. Such are those of Sherlock, Secker, and Jortin. The happiness of mankind is concerned in the preservation of their works, while those of the frothy declaimer are daily dropping unregretted into the gulph of oblivion.

Yet is it to be lamented, that the glaring and meretricious embellishments of the superficial writer are more commonly imitated, than the chaster beauties of the austere divine. Fine language, as it
is

is called, with a few hacknied sentiments and addresses to the passions, often constitute the whole merit of discourses preached before the most numerous congregations in the metropolis.

The pastors of the largest flocks usually affect popularity. Extemporary preaching is one of the most effectual means of obtaining it. It always pleases the vulgar; probably because it conveys the idea of immediate inspiration. It is true also, that by pleasing it is enabled to affect the vulgar. But yet there are many reasons to prevent its reception among the judicious. It may raise the passions, it may communicate a momentary fit of devotion; but from its hasty production it can seldom be polished or solid. It is, indeed, seldom attempted but by the superficial. The greatest divines have not been presumptuous enough to lay before their audience the effusions of the moment, but have usually bestowed much time and care in the composition of a single sermon. We are indeed informed, that Clarke sometimes preached

without written notes; but the number of his printed sermons is a proof that this was not his general practice. They who possess the abilities of a Clarke may, however, safely venture to produce an unpremeditated harangue. But they would do right to recollect, that the orations even of a Demosthenes smelt of the lamp.

Against those who prepare their discourses, a general complaint has been made, that sermons are become in these days merely moral essays. There was a time when a passage from scripture, well introduced, was esteemed a flower of speech far surpassing every ornament of rhetoric. It is now avoided as an ugly patch, that chequers with deformity the glossy contexture.

A professed christian preacher, addressing a professed christian audience, should remember, that, however beautiful his discourse, if it is no more than a moral discourse, he may preach it, and they may hear it, and yet both continue unconverted heathens.

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Every congregation of real christians wishes to find all morality deduced from scripture, and confirmed by it. Moral precepts, thus adorned, come from the pulpit as from an oracle. Scriptural language is not inelegant; but if it were, a preacher should let motives of duty exclude ostentation. In truth, he never appears to greater advantage, than when he seems to forget his own excellence, and to lose sight of himself in his endeavour to promote the welfare of his audience.

ESSAY XVI.

ON LOGIC AND METAPHYSICS.

TO false and careless reasoning most of the misfortunes of life are to be attributed. Logic then, as an art, is perhaps so far useful in the conduct of life, as it superinduces a habit of accurate reasoning.

But what says experience? Is the man who has digested Burgersdicius found to be wiser in his actions than others? The best disputant that ever conquered in the schools, when he has descended to the walks of common life, has been found no less prone to deviate into the paths of error, to be involved in the clouds of passion, and misled by the false lights of imagination, than the busy multitude who never heard of the categories.

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They who possess common sense in a competent degree, will discover, with no other aid, the fallacy of wrong reasoning. They who are deficient in it, will not find a substitute in the use of a syllogism.

The great numbers who supply civil and commercial offices, in which there is a constant necessity for the exertion of reason, and who conduct the most important affairs without the aid of scholastic logic, are proofs that vigorous nature wants not this slender assistance. To imagine that a well-formed mind cannot reason well without logic, is no less absurd, than to suppose that the solid oak is supported by the ivy that creeps around it.

The best school for the improvement of reason is the living world. We find the illiterate, who have spent their lives in constant action, possessing a very extensive knowledge of things, and a most accurate method of judging of them; a knowledge and a method to which the cultivated reasoner can seldom attain.

It is common to see the learned academic, whose labours are at last rewarded by a rural benefice, unable, notwithstanding his acquired strength of reason, to cope with the rude rustic in a bargain for dues which the laws have allotted him.

It seems, then, that the gradual decay of logical studies, and the contempt in which syllogistic skill is held, is not unreasonable. It contributes little to the benefit of society. It is rather injurious to it, by drawing off that attention which might be usefully bestowed. What then shall we say? Must an art, which our forefathers have studied from age to age, and to which ourselves have devoted our first years at our universities, be exploded? A veneration is due to long established opinions. The powers of judging, which stimulate the present age to innovation, were possessed by the past in equal perfection. Some reason they had for their institutions. The same reason may perhaps remain to prevent the total abolition of them; for truth
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and reason are unchangeable. Our ancestors established logical studies, because in their days there were few other books to be obtained, and no other learning prized. Their descendants must continue to bestow on them a moderate attention, because every part of knowledge contributes to accomplish the professed scholar. But they need give no more than a moderate attention, because the improvements in philosophy, and the great multiplication of books in every part of human learning, enable the student to spend his time and sagacity more usefully and more agreeably.

He who possesses the genius and taste of the attic Harris, will do right to cultivate it by studying the unread works of Porphyry and Ammonius, Plotinus and Jamblichus. Our English Aristotle, whose productions are at once the quintessence of elegance, and prodigies of analytical ingenuity, has pointed out flowers in those paths of learning where thorns only were seen before. The Stagyrice was literally idolized; and had it
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been the fate of Harris to have lived a few centuries ago, he also would have been honoured with a subordinate deification. If any thing can restore a taste for these languishing studies, it is the grace which his style and his accuracy have given them.

For metaphysics what can be said? If every book that has been written on them; and thousands have been written, were annihilated, not a single individual in the great community of all mankind would in any one respect have just reason to lament the loss. Mathematical and arithmetical studies are speculative, it is true; but they do not terminate in speculation. They afford a great pleasure, abstractedly considered, by the full evidence with which they display their truths; but they tend to obvious utility as well as delight. The builder, the navigator, almost every mechanic art, is assisted by geometry, and all men without exception in some degree benefited by arithmetic. But metaphysics tend only to benign the understanding
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in a cloud of its own making, to lose it in a labyrinth of its own contrivance.

Metaphysics were once encouraged and cultivated, because they served the purposes of superstition. They involved theological subjects in a perplexity which the simple could never unravel. They gave an air of mystery and depth, which caught the admiration of the vulgar. They are now employed, in a similar manner, in the service of infidelity. They have induced the half learned and the conceited, those who think they understand them, and those who wish to be thought by others to understand them, to adopt, without being apprehensive of danger, opinions fatal to their own happiness and to the existence of society.

Even when cultivated by the honest and truly ingenious, they exhibit an instance of blameable pride. They aim at a science to which man can never attain. It is truly laughable, to observe a creature with hardly knowledge enough of the things around him to guide him with safety, perplexing himself with
ontological

ontological enquiries into the nature of angels, and the essence of the devil.

The ontologists and pneumatologists, the nominales and reales, the doctores seraphici, and all the tribe of microscopic philosophers, are, in the present age of discernment, totally neglected. Even Malebranche and Locke, the most rational of the metaphysicians, are daily losing ground. As a task they are attended to in public seminaries, where some obsolete plan of study requires metaphysical exercises; but the multitude of more agreeable works seldom leave time or inclination, to the student who is at liberty to chuse his books, for the controversy concerning innate ideas. A few however, in the present times, have been so unfortunate, as to waste their labours in defending materialism, in expatiating on liberty and necessity, in diffusing scepticism, and in proving that man is no more than an animal.

Such miserable effects of metaphysical research have induced an amiable writer, whose heart and abilities vie with each

each other for excellence, to vindicate the nature and immutability of truth, to expose the futility of metaphysics, to confound the devices of their patrons, and to establish the natural rights of common sense. This formidable champion has given the last fatal blow to languishing sophistry; a blow, which, that she may never recover, every man must wish, who knows the baneful influence of a Hume's dark inventions, and who desires to counteract it.

To put an end to speculative error, it might perhaps, in some degree, be effectual to lay less stress upon metaphysics in academical education. Those who preside over our seminaries are no less liberal than enlightened, and will doubtless, if any part of the present system of instruction is trifling or pernicious, renounce it with alacrity. But a deference to their respectable opinions renders it reasonable to suppose, that an attention to this abstruse, though otherwise useless science, may tend to give the young mind a habit of thinking with

with depth and precision. As a severe discipline, it may be advantageous. Many a manœuvre is taught the soldier in his course of preparation for war, which will seldom be useful in the field of battle.

They who have no opportunity of being serviceable to others, have an unquestionable right to seek amusement in abstruse speculation. They may puzzle themselves for diversion even in metaphysics. But if, in the course of their enquiries, they should fall upon a wonderful discovery, which, when divulged, would disturb the happy ignorance of mankind, let them for once be selfish, and withhold it from the public.

E S S A Y XVII.

ON LATIN VERSE AS AN EXERCISE AT SCHOOLS.

Det primos verſibus annos.

PETRONIUS.

NO part of claſſical education has been more generally cenſured and more firmly adhered to, than that of exerciſing boys in the compoſition of Latin poetry. The trite remark, that a poet is born, and not formed by diſcipline, has been urged againſt it. It has been alledged, that the time beſtowed on it would be more advantageouſly ſpent in the ſtudy of things, and in acquiring a right method of expreſſing our ſentiments in humble proſe. It is abſurd enough, ſay the objectors, to exact a certain portion of Engliſh verſe from
N the

the scholar; but to perplex him with Latin verse, at a time when he might be learning a thousand useful things; what is it but extreme imprudence, countenanced indeed by general practice, but nevertheless both culpable and truly ridiculous?

They allow, however, that the custom is general, and of long duration. Surely then that degree of respect is due to the general opinion of mankind, and to the wisdom of our predecessors, which leads us to presume, there must have been some benefit perceived by experience from an institution thus ancient and universal. And it is natural to consider, whether a few arguments may not be found in favour of a mode silently and uniformly pursued, amid the loud clamour every where raised against it.

The defenders of practices unjustly censured, often do an injury to their cause, by admitting none of the objections to be reasonable. We will then allow, that to learn to make Latin verse is to lose time, when the scholar is destined

destined to spend his life in commercial or in mechanical employments. But, at the same time, we must insist on its utility to the man of independent fortune, to the divine, the lawyer, the physician, and perhaps to the accomplished military commander.

To all these an acquaintance with the classics will add an elegance, such as tends to complete their characters as gentlemen, as well as scholars. It is the finishing polish of education, and operates on the mind, like dancing on the person, by superadding a graceful habit. But there is no method so well calculated to infuse an intimate knowledge of an author, as to imitate and endeavour to rival his excellences. To write Virgilian verse with true elegance, it is necessary to commit to memory every phrase; to catch the very spirit of Virgil; to mark the varied pauses of his verses, the length of his periods, the peculiar grace of his expressions; and to give the whole a majestic dignity. All these requisites to poetical composition in La-

tin, can only be acquired by a frequent and attentive perusal of the noble Mantuan.

The first-fruits of genius produced by the finest writers that adorn our annals, were compositions in Latin verse. Milton, at a boyish age, wrote it with great elegance. Cowley excelled in it early. Addison was much celebrated for his juvenile essays in it. Prior began with writing Latin epigrams. All the great men who have been educated at public schools, where it is invariably an exercise, were, during several years, obliged to compose it as a daily task; and though many were never distinguished in poetry, yet they derived many advantages from the attempt.

Difficulty is naturally painful; but to overcome it, causes a very sensible pleasure, and facilitates future conquests, by adding courage. To write Latin verse, is certainly an arduous task to a young boy; but the authority of his master, and a spirit of emulation, urge him to attempt with alacrity what his own
indolence

indolence would have led him to neglect. Long practice gives facility. He finds he has overcome what he once thought insurmountable. When any new undertaking offers itself in future, with a difficult and forbidding aspect, he is not affrighted; for he recollects, that he has already surmounted what he once deemed impracticable. The exertion necessary to perform what is not easy, has a natural tendency to give the mind fresh vigour.

A subject taken from a classic, a moral sentiment, or an ingenious remark, is given to a boy to employ his leisure during the intervals of school. He is taught, that there must be an unity in his design; that he must invent a thought, on which he is to display, if he can, good sense, and Augustan wit, expressed in the most elegant versification. This tends to give him a knowledge of things, at the same time that it renders it necessary to call up to his assistance all his classical phraseology. He must revolve many ideas in his mind before this thought

occurs. In this process he exercises the powers of judgment, of discrimination, of taste. He recollects all his reading, he reviews all he has seen and heard, he searches books on similar topics, and at once improves what he has obtained, and makes new acquisitions.

He who has been conversant in great schools will have seen copies of verses written as the exercises of an evening, in which were displayed wit, humour, fine language, ingenious turns, harmonious verse, and very shrewd observations on men and things. Such were the *Lusus Westmonasterienses*; such were many in the *Musæ Etonenses*, and such are thousands that have never yet been offered to the public view. It is a known truth, that many of the boys, who were engaged in these useful sports of a fertile genius, afterwards became distinguished members of the literary or the political republic; and they owed much of that good reception which they met with in the world, to the fame of classical scholarship, acquired at their school,

Every

Every liberal scholar desires to extend his views, and to be enabled to derive literary pleasure from all that is capable of affording it. If he has formed no taste for modern Latin poetry, he will be a stranger to many most pleasing productions. But he cannot have a just relish for them, unless he has a knowledge of prosody, and of their various metres; and of these he cannot have a perfect knowledge, such a knowledge as will enable him to judge of their finer graces, without having composed Latin poetry.

It is certain, that none of the modern Latinists equalled Virgil and Horace, and that the classical student can no where find entertainment so unmixed as in their original writings. But the daintiest fare that an Apicius ever invented, ceased to please when constantly repeated. Nor can he be said to have an undistinguishing taste, or a coarse appetite, who seeks variety in the writings of the Virgilian Vida, and in the sweet strains of our own Vincent Bourne. There is often a happy union of the beauties that

distinguish Ovid, Tibullus, and Martial, in the *Carmina Quadragesimalia*. Rapin, Vanier, Buchanan, and Browne, seem to have written Latin verse with an ease, which would almost lead to a supposition that Latin was their vernacular language. In miscellaneous publications of our own and other nations, the man of taste will find a multitude of poemata, which he may read with pleasure without danger of corrupting the purity of his style.

Merely as the means of enjoying a sweet and innocent pleasure in greater perfection, of filling up a leisure hour with an elegant amusement, the composition of Latin verse may be justly recommended to the affluent and the generous youth*. Others, it must be owned, will be much better employed in learning their pence-table.

* They whose principles are,

———— *quærenda pecunia primum,*
Versus post nummos. ———

E S S A Y XVIII.

ON NOVEL READING.

—— Peccare docentes

Fallax historias monet.

HOR.

IF it is true, that the present age is more corrupt than the preceding, the great multiplication of Novels probably contributes to its degeneracy. Fifty years ago there was scarcely a Novel in the kingdom. Romances, indeed, abounded; but they, it is supposed, were rather favourable to virtue. Their pictures of human nature were not exact, but they were flattering resemblances. By exhibiting patterns of perfection, they stimulated emulation to aim at it. They led the fancy through a beautiful wilderness of delights, and they filled the

the heart with pure, manly, bold, and liberal sentiments.

Even those books which were written with a view to ridicule the more absurd romantic writers, are themselves most pleasing romances, and may be read without injury to the morals. Such is the immortal work of Cervantes. Perhaps the safest books of entertainment are those of decent humour, which excite a laugh, and leave the heart little affected.

Books are more read in youth than in the advanced periods of life. But there are few that are perfectly adapted to youth. They should be entertaining, or they will not be attended to. They should not be profound, for they will not be understood. Entertaining books there are; but they were not written solely for young people, and are therefore too unguarded in their representations. They do not pay that reverence which Juvenal asserts to be due to the puerile age*.

* Maxima debetur pueris reverentia— Juv.
That

That Richardson's Novels are written with the purest intentions of promoting virtue, none can deny. But in the accomplishment of this purpose scenes are laid open, which it would be safer to conceal, and sentiments excited, which it would be more advantageous to early virtue not to admit. Dangers and temptations are pointed out; but they are dangers that seldom occur, and temptations by which few in comparison are assaulted. It is to be feared, the moral view is rarely regarded by the inexperienced, who naturally pay the greatest attention to the lively description of love, and its effects; and who, while they read, long to be actors in the scenes which they admire.

The genius of Fielding entitles him to a high rank among the classics. His works exhibit a series of pictures drawn with all the descriptive fidelity of a Hogarth. They are highly entertaining, and will always be read with pleasure; but they likewise disclose scenes, which
may

may corrupt the mind unseasoned by experience.

Smollet undoubtedly possessed great merit. He would, however, have been more generally read among the polite and refined, if his humour had been less coarse. And it would be adviseable to defer the perusal of his works, till the judgment is mature.

Their writings, however, display the beauties of true genius, to compensate for their faults. But the multitude of memoirs, private histories, and curious anecdotes, imported from our neighbouring land of libertinism, have seldom any thing to recommend them to perusal but their profligacy. Yet these, adorned with specious titles, and a pert vivacity of language, have found their way to the circulating libraries, and are obtruded on the attention of every age and rank.

The English press has teemed with similar original productions. The effects of that coarse taste introduced in the reign of Charles the Second, have scarcely yet decreased. The sentimental man-

ON NOVEL READING. 189

ner seems, however, likely to supplant it. But it is matter of doubt, whether even this manner is not equally dangerous. It has given an amiable name to vice, and has obliquely excused the extravagance of the passions, by representing them as the effect of lovely sensibility. The least refined affections of humanity have lost their indelicate nature, in the ideas of many, when dignified by the epithet of sentimental; and transgressions forbidden by the laws of God and man, have been absurdly palliated, as proceeding from an excess of those finer feelings, which vanity has arrogated to itself as elegant distinctions. A softened appellation has given a degree of gracefulness to moral deformity.

The languishing and affectedly sentimental compositions formed on the pattern of Sterne, or of other less original Novelists, not only tend to give the mind a degree of weakness, which renders it unable to resist the slightest impulse of passion, but also indirectly insinuate, that the attempt is unnecessary
self-

self-denial. What then remains to support the feeble efforts of remaining virtue, but the absence of temptation?

Such books, however pernicious their tendency, are the most easily obtained. The prudence of their publishers suggests the expediency of making them conveniently portable. Every corner of the kingdom is abundantly supplied with them. In vain is youth secluded from the corruptions of the living world. Books are commonly allowed without restriction, as innocent amusements; yet these often pollute the heart in the recesses of the closet, inflame the passions at a distance from temptation, and teach all the malignity of vice in solitude.

There is another evil arising from a too early attention to Novels. They fix attention so deeply, and afford so lively a pleasure, that the mind once accustomed to them cannot submit to the painful task of serious study. Authentic history becomes insipid. The reserved graces of the chaste matron Truth, are totally absorbed in the splendor of fiction. The
boy

boy who can procure Gil Blas, and the Devil upon Two Sticks, will no longer think his Livy, his Sallust, his Homer, or his Virgil, pleasing. He will not study old Lilly, while he can read Pamela, and Tom Jones.

When the judgment is ripened by reflection, and the morals out of danger, every well-written book will claim attention. The man of application may find agreeable refreshment, after severer study, in the amusing pages of a Fielding; but the fungous growth of the common Novel-wright will be too insignificant to attract his notice.

The extreme insipidity of our later productions, it might have been supposed, would have prevented their reception. But insipid minds find in them entertainment congenial to their nature. And, indeed, the futility of the modern Novel precludes its power of causing any other mischief, than the consumption of time that might be more usefully employed.

If,

If, however, Novels are to be prohibited, in what, it will be asked, can the young mind employ itself during the hours of necessary leisure? There is no doubt, but that, after the sweetened poison is removed, plain and wholesome food will be relished. The growing mind will always crave nourishment, and will gladly seek it in true histories, written in a pleasing and easy style, on purpose for its use. Voyages and Travels, when not obscured by scientific observations, are always delightful to youthful curiosity. From interesting narratives, like those of *Telemachus*, and *Robinson Crusoe*, a mind not vitiated by false taste will derive a very sensible pleasure. Let the boy's library consist of *Rollin's History*, *Plutarch's Lives*, and the *Spectators*; and, together with the improvement of his morals and understanding, he will have it in his power to spend his vacant time in such mental amusements as are truly and permanently delightful.

E S S A Y XIX.

ON MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS.

——— *sepulchri*
Mittē supervacuos honores.

HOD.

IT was the early wish of Pope, that, when he died, not a stone might tell where he lay. It is a wish that will commonly be granted with reluctance. The affection of those we leave behind us, is at a loss for methods to display its wonted sollicitude, and seeks consolation under sorrow in doing honour to all that remains. It is natural that filial piety, parental tenderness, and conjugal love, should mark the clay-cold spot, where the form still fostered in the bosom moulders away, with some fond memorial.

O

morial. And did affection go no farther, who could censure? But, in recording the virtues of the departed, either zeal or vanity frequently leads to an excess perfectly ludicrous.

A marble monument with a false or pompous inscription is no less offensive to true taste, than the wooden memorial of the rustic, sculptured with painted bones, and decked out with death's-heads in all the colours of the rainbow. There is an elegance and a classical simplicity in the turf-clad heap of mould which covers the poor man's grave, though it has nothing to defend it from the insults of the proud, but a bramble. The primrose that grows upon it is a better ornament than the gilded lies on the oppressor's tombstone.

The prostitution of praise is injurious to virtue. That imaginary life after death, which consists in a remembrance of our worth cherished in the breasts of others, though it is despised by the severe reasoner, has commonly been an additional motive for exertion to the noblest

hoblest spirits that have dignified human nature. But when we see the studied panegyric engraved on the marble that incloses the remains of the worthless, we despise the eulogium that mankind are mean enough to bestow on every one that will pay the price. Thus one powerful motive is lost, which might operate on the generous in stimulating them to a worthy conduct.

On the tombstones of the truly great, it is right that there should be an inscription consistent with their dignity. In order to be so, it must not be prolix. When their names and age make all their sepulchral history, it seems to be implied that the rest is sufficiently known; but when the marble ambitiously enlarges on their excellence, it seems as if the world wanted the information. It is better that the passenger, when he sees an eminent name, should recollect, while he strikes his pensive bosom, the virtues of its owner, than that his remarks should be anticipated by an obtruding narrative.

The style of epitaphs usually adopted has been too diffuse. The noble ancients, those patterns of unaffected magnificence, consulted real dignity in the brevity of their epitaphs. As an historical monument, at an age when printing was unknown, they sometimes engraved the exploits of a warrior on the marble; but in general they recorded little more than the name of the defunct. The Grecian muse sometimes poured the sweet melody of verse at the shrine of a poet or hero; but she never condescended to mean flattery, nor displayed the bloated ostentation of modern panegyric.

There are many excellent epitaphs in the English language, both in verse and prose. In the diffuse kind, that on the infamous Chartres is a fine model. Westminster Abbey exhibits many inscriptions written with manly, forcible, energetic elegance. The great fault has been, a redundancy of epithets in the superlative degree.

We

We have also many fine poetical epitaphs. Those of Dryden and Pope are the most deservedly celebrated. In general, the metrical are inferior to the prosaic. Some of the best are crowded with antithesis, a fault which renders them inferior to the Grecian; and some of the worst, many of which are found in the most public cœmeteries, stand forth a disgrace to national taste. The love of rhyme descends to the lowest ranks. The parish-clerk is commonly called upon for a stave or two of verses, by every rustic that can raise a post to the memory of his relation; and there are few church-yards in the kingdom, where the favourite stanza "Afflictions fore long time I bore," does not occur more than once.

But our epitaphs are most commonly written in Latin; probably because it is intelligible to foreigners, and is capable of more elegance and elevation. Our country has produced many writers remarkable for beautiful latinity: accordingly we find inscriptions in every part

of the kingdom abounding with classical expressions. The misfortune has been, that our epitaphs have encroached on the province of biography; and real dignity has been lost in the affectation of it, in a tedious and circumstantial detail. The reader is tired, before he has obtained a clear idea of the character described. His eyes have failed, even if his attention persevered. The epitaph on the pious Nelson, for instance, consists of above eighty lines.

The punning and epigrammatic epitaph was much in fashion a century or two ago. That on fair Rosamond might have been replete with tender sentiment, but it is now a wretched* distich of puns and monkish rhymes. This species is at present quite exploded, and little

* *Hic jacet in tumbâ rosa mundi, non rosa munda,
Non redolet, sed olet, quæ redolere solet.*

That on RICHARD LATEWAR is well known, and exhibits a curious specimen of the prevailing taste, It begins thus,

A sero bello dives durusque vocatus.

need

need be said to prove its great impropriety. False wit is always misplaced, but the true seems to be excluded from the epitaph. Who can bear buffoonery on a tombstone? The tender and elegiac, or the manly and severe style, seems to be best adapted to the monumental inscription. But neither the pathetic nor sublime is compatible with the ludicrous.

The authors of our epitaphs are seldom known. One of the best that I can recollect, was the classical Bourne. The few he has left us are masterpieces. That in Westminster Abbey, on Dickinson the architect, is truly sublime†.

In our island there has certainly been no dearth of genius for monumental inscriptions; though there is one circumstance which might induce a foreigner to think the contrary. The famous Dutchess of Marlborough is said to have offered, without success, five hundred

† H. S. E.

GULIELMUS DICKINSON Arm,
Architectus;

Qualis! suspice,

Q 4

pounds

pounds for an epitaph adequate to the dignity of her Duke. Her grace, whose taste was not very just, would probably have expected a history long enough to cover with inscription the unwieldy pile of stones called Blenheim House. I cannot help thinking, that a tedious epitaph, minutely relating his achievements, would rather lessen than exalt him in the eyes of mankind. Would not Alexander the Great have appeared less, if it had been written on his tomb, that the son of Philip was reputed to have been, in his day, the wisest general, the boldest hero, the most accomplished man; in short, if all those inflated superlatives had been used, which gothic ideas of grandeur have now introduced?

ESSAY XX.

ON THE CHARACTER OF ATTICUS.

FEW have approached so nearly to a perfect character as Atticus. To the noblest instances of exalted wisdom and liberality, he added a peculiar elegance of life, seldom attained to even by those who probably possess a taste for its beauty.

But his reputation has of late been sullied by detraction. The Abbe St. Real, in the wantonness of idle ingenuity, has attempted to derogate from his character, by disputing the veracity of his biographer Cornelius Nepos. Unluckily for him, the principal passage he has quoted from Cicero to convict

vict the historian of falsehood is manifestly corrupt, and, when restored to its obvious sense, proves nothing to the purpose. The Abbe, however, takes upon him to represent this amiable man as a time-server, and an artful politician, whose wisdom consisted in little else than a sagacious attention to his own safety.

The penetrating Middleton has also spoken less favourably of the friend of Cicero, than might have been expected. He insinuates, that his Epicurean principles taught him a selfish caution, totally incompatible with the cordiality of friendship. To this prudent, yet not very honourable self-regard, he attributes it, that not one letter of Atticus was published, though not less than sixteen books of Cicero to Atticus have descended to the present times.

There is, it must be owned, on a slight review, a great appearance of insincerity in the conduct of Atticus. But St. Real has too hastily rejected the honourable testimony which Nepos has

borne in his favour; and Middleton seems to have been too much prejudiced against him, by a single passage of Seneca. Seneca asserted, that if Cicero had not drawn Atticus into notice, he would have remained unknown. This, however, may be true, without diminishing his merit. How could he have come down to posterity, but together with the fame of his illustrious friend; since he took not an active part in politics, which might have given him a place in the page of history, and erected no literary monument for the preservation of his own glory?

If, therefore, the character of his contemporary Cornelius Nepos is established as an historian, the fame of Atticus remains undiminished by the cavils of modern enquirers.

In answer to the aspersion, that Nepos was a mean writer, and was little regarded by his own age, it must be affirmed that he was, as we are told by Gellius, the familiar friend of Cicero. It is said also, that a statue was erected to him
by

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by his countrymen of Verona*. If there are defects in any of the writings that pass under his name, they are attributed to the interpolations of Æmilius Probus. His Atticus is allowed to be his own, and a masterpiece of sweet and polished † composition. Cicero speaks highly of him, and he is particularly honoured by Catullus and both the Plinies. He lived at the same time with Atticus, and, had he asserted any notorious untruths, would soon have been refuted by the general voice of living witnesses, who are seldom disposed to be rashly credulous to the voice of praise.

But, setting aside authority, it may be said, that the uncontroverted matter of fact, the intimate connection of Atticus with opposite parties, with Cæsar and with Pompey, with Anthony and with Brutus, with Cicero, Clodius, and Hortensius

* Onaphr. Panavini Catalogus illustrium Scriptorum Veronensium.

† Limatissimus Scriptor. Scioppius de Stylo.

fius, is a proof of uncommon management, not to say duplicity. From this fact I would deduce a different inference. His friendship with the greatest men of his times, whatever were their political divisions, does honour to his integrity. Had he concerned himself with faction, no cunning could have secured him from the hatred of some of the parties, and a subsequent proscription. Had he been mean, base, artful, he would have been unanimously despised by all. They who differed in every thing else, would have agreed in exposing one whose villany deserved contempt, and whose influence was not great enough to justify connivance. The truth seems to be, that he was superior to the little views of party. His general philanthropy was stronger than his particular attachments, and in his warm regard for the excellence of his friends, he overlooked the failings that caused their animosity. Though he lived at a distance from the capital, and chose not to exert his influence, if he possessed

possessed any, yet such was his personal dignity, that, in his intercourse with Cicero and the greatest men of his times, he never appeared in the light of an inferior. They seem indeed to have treated him with an unusual deference.

That he cultivated a friendship with them, and did them every good office that humanity directed by judgment could suggest, is true. But we have it on record, that he courted not the fortunate alone. To those who wanted his protection, and were least likely to repay it, he was most ready to afford it.

Devoted to letters, and to all the studies that refine and elevate the liberal mind, he was idolized at Athens, where he found a sweet asylum from the tumult of faction. His situation in this place was truly enviable. In the centre of taste and learning, with a discernment that enabled him to select and relish the best of their productions, beloved by all around, and even courted by the great, he spent his time at Athens, in all the elegant tranquillity of the refined Epicurus.

curus. His departure from it was publicly lamented, and the regret of that discerning people reflects an honour on him, far greater than an ovation.

Though a man of taste, of letters, of important connections, he was yet enabled to give attention to domestic œconomy. His family regulations were peculiar indeed, but such as became a philosopher. All his servants were qualified to read to him, and to perform the office of amanuenses. He was elegant, says Nepos, not magnificent; splendid, not profuse. The unaffected beauty of delicate neatness was his object, not the ostentation of opulence.

A very distinguishing and honourable part of his character, was his utter detestation of deceit. He abhorred a lie. A circumstance which renders the charge of time-serving duplicity improbable. That he appeared less affected with his friend Cicero's misfortunes, is not so much to be attributed to insincerity, as to some apparently weak conduct in Cicero himself.

The

The goodness of his disposition appeared in the constancy of his attachments, and in the delight he felt in acts of beneficence; but it shone nowhere more amiably than in his behaviour as a son and a brother. His mother lived to the age of ninety; and he used to mention with pleasure, that he never was involved with her in one moment's disagreement. He gloried in living on the most affectionate terms with his sister.

He died in a good old age. But it is to be lamented, that after a long life, as perfect as reason unassisted could render it, he precipitated his death by refusing sustenance, in order to avoid the recurrence of a painful disease. He acted consistently with the principles of Epicurus, who taught that pain was the greatest evil. A mind like his would have been the first to have refuted such errors, had he lived in a later age, and been the disciple of a greater than Epicurus.

Delineated by the pencil of Cornelius Nepos, he shines forth a beautiful portrait.

trait. Nor can I see the use of those minute enquiries, which tend to lower an elevated character. The more examples of human excellence, the more honourable and advantageous to human nature. Truth, indeed, in all cases should be carefully investigated; but when it already appears to be sufficiently established on the side of virtue, that restlessness of learned research, which seeks to sap its foundations, is not only impertinent, but criminal.

E S S A Y XXI.

ON BIOGRAPHY.

Beatos puto quibus deorum munere datum est
aut facere scribenda aut scribere legenda: bea-
tissimos vero, quibus utrumque.

PLINIUS.

AMONG the many arguments ad-
vanced to recommend the study
of history, it has been said, that it
teaches wisdom without the danger of
experience, and, by pointing out the paths
of those who have gone before us, faci-
litates the journey of life. History has
been called philosophy teaching by ex-
amples. But, after all, it must be al-
lowed, that civil history is less capable
of regulating moral than political con-
duct. The descriptions of battles, the
accounts of debates, the characters of
3 kings

kings and heroes, contain very little that can regulate the actions of the private and more numerous ranks in the community.

But an exact and authentic account of individuals, who have greatly excelled in any of the departments of active or contemplative life, seems to be a mode of instruction best suited to an animal, like man, prone to imitation. When a single character is distinctly delineated, we can pursue the outline, with an ease equal to that with which the painter copies from the original picture placed before his eyes. We have the *μυθὸς ἱστῆς*, the express authority of the pattern we have chosen, to direct us in every emergency, and can tread with implicit confidence in the footsteps of the most distinguished men, without the suspense of deliberate selection. The story of an individual, as it is a single object, is comprehended more

* Διὰ τὴν πᾶσι τῶν ἱστορίων ἡδὲ ἀκούομεν τῶν περὶ ἐν συνήθειαις ἢ τῶν περὶ πολλὰς περιγρηγορευμένων, &c.

ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡ. ΠΑΡΕΒ.

fully, and attended to with greater pleasure.

For these reasons, Biography appears to be more instructive than civil history, though it has commonly been written with a less degree of attention. Herodotus is all sweetness. Thucydides exhibits the solid and austere beauties. Xenophon, the attic bee, presents us with a style flowing with honey. Livy displays a most masterly composition, and paints in glowing colours all that he relates. Sallust rivals his Grecian master; and in modern times, Guicciardin, Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon, have exhibited in their writings the genuine graces of the historic muse. But among Biographers, scarcely any can justly claim a rank with the first writers of the golden age.

As a diligent collector of facts, as a warm friend to virtue, as an entertaining narrator, I venerate the name of Plutarch. His writings bear evident marks of extensive reading, and communicate much multifarious knowledge. Theodore

More Gaza has said, that if all books were lost, and he might recover one, it should be Plutarch. He is indeed an invaluable treasure of antient learning; for he selected passages from books now totally lost, and inserted them very liberally in his works. Add to this, that he is an admirable moralist. But his judgment seems not to have been always strong enough to manage the unwieldy mass of learning he had assembled*. He indulged the weakest superstition. He is for ever relating stories, which Horace calls *ANILES*, old wives tales. Merely for an ostentatious display of erudition, he digresses without limits. The idea of parallels was excellent; and he has sometimes drawn them admirably, though, as the critics say, not without a partiality to his own countrymen. They have convicted him of this unphilosophical attachment in the comparison between Tully and Demos-

* *Melior quam acutior doctor.*

LIPSIUS.

thenes, Cato and Aristides, Sylla and Lyfander, Marcellus and Pelopidas.

They who are willing to allow him every other merit, give up his style as harsh and inelegant*. Though certainly an useful, he cannot be esteemed a fine writer; and whatever he possesses, his instance does not refute the assertion, that biographical has never yet equalled civil history.

The long and diffuse accounts of Plutarch have been compared to colossal statues; the concise histories of Cornelius Nepos, to medallions. Cornelius Nepos has a claim from the age he flourished in, from his language, and from his fidelity to the rank of a classic; but by no means to the first rank. It is suspected by many, that as Trogus was epitomized by Justin, so Nepos was abbreviated by a writer, who flourished un-

* Tamen dissimulare non possum dictionem ejus gravem quidem esse, sed duriusculam videri.

Vossius.

Plutarchi oratio aspera et merosa.

PETRUS VICTOR.

der

der Theodosius in the declension of polite literature. The life of Atticus, if we may pronounce from internal evidence, continues unaltered, and reflects great honour on its writer, as a fine copy of a beautiful original. •

Diogenes Laertius chose a subject well adapted to display ingenuity. The lives of the wisest men whom the world ever produced, if well written, would have been a most valuable acquisition to ancient learning. But, with a fine subject, he was a poor writer.

It is to be wished, that Tacitus had more frequently exercised his talents in biography. His life of Agricola is, perhaps, the best biographical work that was ever composed. It is written in that beautiful energetic style, which characterises this spirited historian; and it is more pleasing than his other works, because it exhibits not a deformed portrait. Mallet's Life of Bacon is a good imitation of it.

Suetonius probably drew his pictures from the life, and they are loathsome to

behold. They are, however, useful to the philosopher, as they enable him to form a more complete idea of human nature in all the gradations of degeneracy and perfection. They are also well written. Concise, nervous, simple, they please by their perspicuity, and freedom from ambitious ornament. To the honour of their author it must be said, that he appears to have advanced nothing through flattery or resentment, nor to have suppressed any thing through fear, but to have paid an undaunted regard to veracity. Erasmus observes, that he wrote as freely as the emperors whom he described had lived.

It is matter of surprise and regret, that we have not more biographers. Thousands and tens of thousands, eminent in every accomplishment, whose examples might have instructed the world, are become as though they had never been. In our own country, it is true, there are many biographical compilations, but they are for the most part incomplete. Wood's *Athenæ*, though a book that does honour

nour to our most celebrated university, has no merit as a composition. Fuller's and Birch's works are less circumstantial, and less read by the common people, than the Lives of the Highwaymen.

Worth is often unknown, or known imperfectly, till after death; till that period, when it is too late to learn particular circumstances with accuracy. Many of our second-rate authors and actors in every department of life, though richly deserving a place in the annals of fame, are recorded only in those volumes, where to be born and die, as Pope says, makes all the history.

To preserve their actions from oblivion and misrepresentation, some writers have been their own biographers. The task requires great delicacy. The very attempt implies a considerable degree of self-value; but it has been justified by Thuanus and Hume*,

* *Plerique suam ipsi vitam narrare fiduciam potius morum quam arrogantiam arbitrati sunt; nec id Rutilio et Scauro citra fidem aut obsequationi fuit.*

TAC.

There

There has appeared in our times and country a biographical work on an extensive plan. The first edition of the *Biographia Britannica* was well designed, yet unequally and, upon the whole, indifferently executed. Many distinguished lives are totally omitted; many insignificant lives tediously described. Though there is sometimes much labour and sagacity exerted, yet there are few masterly remarks. Most of the articles were furnished by writers of no great repute; and there was every reason for the new edition now undertaken. If I might presume to suggest an improvement, I would advise, that elegantly engraved heads should be prefixed to every life, whenever they can be procured; and that the materials should not be collected from books only, but from the traditionary reports, and the manuscript letters remaining in the families of descendants. The names of the living persons who communicate the hints should be added, both to secure and to confirm their authenticity.

E S S A Y XXII.

ON HOSPITALITY, AND THE
LITTLE CIVILITIES OF LIFE.

Leniores virtutes.

Cic.

IN the days of Horace*, our countrymen were reputed to be savage in their behaviour to strangers. Though in the present age the charge would be unjust, yet it must be owned, that there is a reserve in the manner of an unadulterated Englishman, which seems to confirm the opinion, that he inherits a portion of the unsocial spirit of his ancestors. Whatever may be his natural propensity, it is certain, that, in the liberal intercourse and comprehensive education that prevail in the present times, there

* *Vifam Britannos hofpitibus feros.*

Hor.

is

is scarcely any country in the world where a more cordial hospitality is displayed, than in England.

The days of Elizabeth have been extolled as the days of genuine hospitality. The doors were thrown open, and, at the sound of the dinner-bell, all the neighbouring country crowded to the smoking table. These were times indeed, says the railer against modern refinement. Yet it may be doubted, whether this indiscriminate hospitality was laudable. There was something generous and magnificent in the idea; it gave the nobles of the land the influence of kings over their neighbourhood; it contributed to extend a general freedom of spirit. Yet if its motive and its moral effect are considered, it will appear justly exploded. It proceeded from the love of power and from ostentation, and it produced gluttony, drunkenness, and all their consequent vices.

Considered in a charitable light, as affording food to the hungry, it will be found a less useful mode than the modern institutions.

institutions. It did not select its objects; it considered not the degrees of indigence or of desert. The consequence was, that it increased indigence, and lessened desert; for experience has proved, that unnecessary alms, however amiable the motive of them, do a real injury where they mean a benefit. They promote idleness, by teaching poverty to rely on other aid than the efforts of honest industry.

The great number of houses for the reception of travellers in every part of the kingdom, and the expeditious modes of travelling, which render delay unnecessary, have contributed to restrain that general hospitality which opened the door to all who came. But there never was a time when judicious civility of all kinds was more liberally shewn to strangers, than the present. And whatever the old Romans or the modern Gauls may assert of British ferocity of manners, no Italian or Frenchman of character ever came to our* separated shore,

* ——— *Toto diviso orbe Britannos.* Juv.
without

without having felt, though he may not have expressed it, delight at his hearty reception, and regret on his departure.

It seems probable that hospitality keeps pace with civilization. As the minds of a people are enlarged by improvements in knowledge, and communication with their neighbours, the selfish and morose affections gradually lose ground. In several parts of Europe, where social improvements have not yet reached, the traveller is either considered as lawful prey, or else totally disregarded*. On the other hand, we find the natives of the Society Isles, separated as they are from all the rest of the world, and by no means far removed from the savage state, remarkably hospitable. Though fear might cause their civility to Europeans, yet it was not the sole motive of it; for we find their good offices, after all apprehensions were removed, evidently proceeding from the

* ——— The rude Cariothian boar
Against the houseless stranger shuts the door.

GOLDEN RITH.
tenderest

tenderest and most generous affection. On the first appearance of the English on their coasts, they naturally considered them as enemies, and boldly opposed their invasion. Many of them exhibited acts of heroism, in defence of their country, scarcely exceeded in the annals of antiquity. But no sooner was the branch of peace held out, than they received their wonderful visitors with open arms; with a humanity that reflects disgrace on the maritime villages of Europe, where a shipwrecked fellow-creature and fellow-countryman has been destroyed for the sake of plundering his vessel. In other islands discovered by our circumnavigators, we find, that no kindness could mitigate the ferocity of the rude child of nature. The hospitality of barbarians, like all virtues that proceed not from principle, but from humour and accidental causes, is of little value. A clearer light than the light of nature is necessary to give a steady operation to the workings of humanity.

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The idea which christianity has suggested of the relation in which all men stand to each other, is wonderfully adapted to promote universal hospitality. When we consider all men as brothers, we shall naturally receive the stranger within our gates, with cordial kindness, as a relation whom we have never yet seen before, and to whom we wish to display some signal of our love. It is indeed true, that many who are truly good, do not reduce this generous idea to practice. The reason seems to be, that they suffer the attachments of domestic life, and the connections of consanguinity, to engross the whole of their affections. Add to this, that the actual exercise of beneficence requires something less in our power than benevolence.

However just the complaints of the misery of life, great occasions for the display of beneficence and liberality do not often occur. But there is an hourly necessity for the little kind offices of mutual civility. At the same time that
they

they give pleasure to others, they add to our own happiness and improvement. Habitual acts of kindness have a powerful effect in softening the heart. An intercourse with polished and humane company tends to improve the disposition, because it requires a conformity of manners. And it is certain, that a sense of decorum, and of a proper external behaviour, will restrain those whose natural temper would otherwise break out in acrimonious and petulant conversation. Even the affectation of philanthropy will in time realise it. The pleasure resulting from an act of kindness naturally excites a wish to repeat it; and the general esteem which the character of benevolence procures, is sufficient to induce those to wish for it, who act only from the motives of interest.

Placed in a world where natural evil abounds, we ought to render it supportable to each other, as far as human endeavours can avail. All that can add a sweet ingredient to the bitter cup

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must

must be infused. Amid the multitude of thorns, every flower that will grow must be cultivated with care. But neither pomp nor power are of themselves able to alleviate the load of life. The heart requires to be soothed by sympathy. A thousand little attentions from all around us are necessary to render our days agreeable. The appearance of neglect in any of those with whom we are connected, chills our bosom with chagrin, or raises the fire of resentment. Nothing therefore seems so likely to ensure happiness, as our mutual endeavours to promote it. Our single endeavours, originating and terminating in ourselves, are usually unsuccessful. Providence has taken care to secure that intercourse which is necessary to the existence of society, by rendering it the greatest sweetener of human life.

By reciprocal attentions, we are enabled to become beneficent without expence. A smile, an affable address, a look of approbation, are often capable of giving
a greater

a greater pleasure than pecuniary benefits can bestow. The mere participation of the studies and amusements of others, at the same time that it gratifies ourselves, is often an act of real humanity; because others would not enjoy them without companions. A friendly visit in a solitary hour, is often a greater act of kindness than a valuable present.

It is really matter of surprise, that the great should ever be unpopular in their neighbourhood. They must know the value of popularity, and surely nothing is more easily obtained by a superior. Their notice confers honour; and the aspiring heart of man is always delighted with distinction. A gracious look from them diffuses happiness. But it is unfortunate, that pride or inadvertence often prevent men from acting the godlike part of making others happy, even when they might do it without inconvenience.

ESSAY XXIII.

ON THE MERIT OF ILLUSTRIOUS BIRTH.

Εἰς δὲ ευγενίαν, οὐ γὰρ ἔχω φράσαι καλά,
 Ο μὲν γὰρ σοφὸς εὐγενὴς ἐμμένει αὐτῇ
 Ο δ' οὐ δίκαιος, καὶ ἀμείνων πατρός
 Ζητὸς πεφυκῆ, δυσγενὴς ἴσθαι δοκεῖ.

EURIPIDES.

———— Sanctus haberi,
 Justitizque tenax factis dictisque mereris?
 AGNOSCO PROCEREM.

JUVENAL.

THERE is scarcely any truth of which the world has been more frequently reminded by the moralists, than the unreasonableness of that veneration which is paid to birth. They have been told, that virtue alone is true nobility; but though they have acknowledged

ledged the assertion to be founded in reason, they have continued, with uniform perseverance, in the same error. The luminous glory of an illustrious ancestor, seems to have diffused a brilliancy over a long line of descendants, too opaque of themselves to emit any original irradiations.

Gratitude, which first raised a benefactor to a distinguished rank in civil honours, is willing to continue its returns of kindness to his immediate offspring. This predilection soon leads to the accumulation of honours and possessions; till the incense originally offered, because it was deserved, is lavished at the shrine of opulence.

Subordination is, indeed, essential to society. The order of nobles, as hereditary guardians of the laws, is found an useful political establishment; and none seem so well adapted to supply it, as they who have been raised to eminence by their ancestors, and who possess a territorial patrimony in the land which they are to protect. All that is contended

for is, that the recommendation of birth may not set aside or depreciate real merit, the praise of learning, and the intrinsic value of virtuous exertions.

It is a remarkable circumstance in the history of mankind, that some of the best books have been written, and some of the greatest achievements performed, by those whose blood was truly plebeian. The politest and genteelest books, whether the sentiments or the style be considered, have been produced by slaves, or the descendants of slaves. Horace, Phædrus, and Terence, wrote in a style which must have been the standard of a court, to an intercourse with which they were by no means entitled by their extraction. The founders of the most distinguished families emerged from the middle and the lower classes, by the superior vigour of their natural abilities, or by extraordinary efforts, assisted by fortune. And unless the adventitious circumstances of wealth can effect a change in the constituent principles of the mind and body, there is no real superiority

periority derived in a boasted pedigree of Tudors and Plantagenets.

And yet there have appeared writers who have ventured to maintain, that the minds of the nobility seem to be cast in a finer mould, and to have an elegance inherent in their original constitution. According to this hypothesis, we must go on to suppose, that the mind of a commoner, exalted to the higher order of senators, catches this elegance by the contagion of invisible effluvia. On his creation he undergoes a kind of new birth, and puts off the *lunæ* which encumbered him in the lower regions. Thus are all the occult perfections of noble blood to be infused by the mandate of a monarch. But no, said Maximilian to a man who asked to be ennobled by him, though I can give you riches and a title, I cannot make you noble.

In truth, there is many a nobleman, according to the genuine idea of nobility, at the loom, at the plough, and in the shop. This genuine idea contains

in it generosity, courage, spirit, and benevolence, the qualities of a warm and open heart, totally unconnected with the accidental advantages of riches and honour ; and many an English sailor has possessed more of the real hero than a lord of the admiralty.

If indeed there is any real difference in the quality of their blood, the advantage is probably on the side of the inferior classes. Their indigence and their manual employments require temperance and exercise, the best purifiers of the animal juices. But the indolence which wealth excuses, and the pleasures which fashionable life admits without restraint, have a natural tendency to vitiate the body as well as the mind. And among the many privileges inherited by him who boasts nobility in his veins, he commonly receives the seeds of the most painful and the impurest diseases. He displays, indeed, a coronet on his coat of arms, and he has a long pedigree to peruse with secret satisfaction; but he has often a gout or a scrophula, which

make him wish to exchange every drop derived from his Norman ancestors, for the pure tide that warms a peasant's bosom.

The spirit of freedom, moral, mental, and political, which prevails in England, precludes that unreasonable attachment to birth, which, in the countries of despotism, tends to elevate the noble to a rank superior to humanity. In our neighbour's land, the region of external elegance united with real meanness, the implicit veneration paid to birth, adds to the weight of legal oppression. A Frenchman of the plebeian order attends to a Count or a Marquis with all the silent submission of idolatry; on the contrary, there is no doubt but that an English Gondolier would box with the best Lord in the land, if he were affronted, without the least regard for his star and ribbon. It would indeed be an additional pleasure to the natural delight of conquest, to have bruised my Lord. Even the more refined and enlightened do not idolise illustrious birth,

birth. Wealth appears to be the object of more universal veneration. Noble blood and noble titles, without an estate to support them, meet with great compassion indeed, but with little respect; nor is the man who has raised himself to eminence, and who behaves well in it, neglected and despised because he derives no lustre from his forefathers. In a commercial country, where gain is the general object, they who have been most successful in its pursuit will be revered by many, whatever was their origin. In France, where honour is pursued from the monarch to the cleanser of a jakes, the distinction of birth, even with extreme poverty, is enviable. The brother of a Marquis would rather starve on a beggarly pension, than pollute himself with a trade by which he might acquire the revenues of a German kingdom. In our land of good sense, this folly is losing ground; and the younger brothers of noble houses often think it no disgrace to

to rival the heir in a princely fortune acquired by honourable merchandise.

As the world becomes more enlightened, the exorbitant value which has been placed on things not really valuable will decrease. Of all the effects of man's capricious admiration, there are few less rational than the preference of illustrious descent to personal merit, of diseased and degenerate nobility to health, to courage, to learning, and to virtue. Of all the objects of pursuit which are not in our own power*, the want of distinguished birth may most easily be dispensed with, by those who possess a solid judgment of that which makes and keeps us happy. There may be some reason to repine at the want of wealth and fame; but he who has derived from his parent health, vigour, and all the powers of perception, need not lament that he is unnoticed at the herald's office.

* Τα οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

It

It has been observed, that virtue appears more amiable, when accompanied with beauty; it may be added, that it is more useful when recommended to the notice of mankind by the distinction of an honourable ancestry. It is greatly to be wished, that the nobly born would deserve the respect which the world pays them with alacrity, by employing their influence to benevolent purposes, which can at all times be accomplished, even when the patriotic exertions of the field and cabinet are precluded.

E S S A Y XXIV.

ON LORD CHANCELLOR BACON.

NO acts are so truly our own as those of the understanding. The world has long agreed in admiration of Alexander, Cæsar, and Charles of Sweden; and the remark of Cicero seems not to have occurred to them, that the glory of a general is in great measure derived from the merit of those who obey him, and that a thousand contingencies must conspire, to give efficacy to the best concerted plans of military operation.

But the works of genius are commonly produced in solitude. The mind forms its own design, and pursues with-
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in itself all the methods that conduce to its accomplishment. Fortune has little influence in retarding or promoting its purposes. If, then, the proportion of glory which is to redound to an individual, may be estimated by personal merit, independently of external aid and accidental events, the triumphs of ingenuity must be held more honourable than the triumphs of valour, and a conquest of the intellectual world more worthy the dignified page of history, than the subjection of the terraqueous globe. Such a conqueror is the great Bacon; and when the world shall have corrected its erroneous judgment, he will be placed in a rank superior to the son of Philip.

A popular historian of England has, however, depreciated the merit of this glory of our nation. Hume has plainly pronounced him inferior to the Florentine philosopher Galilæo; and he attributes the great applause that has been paid to him, to the illiberal partiality of our national spirit. The suggestions

gestions of this spirit will prompt many to attribute his detraction to national envy.

The testimony of foreigners, who cannot be biaſſed by this prejudice, is truly honourable to our great philoſophers. Baco Verulamius, for ſo they call him, is more frequently mentioned, and with higher applauſe, than the ingenious philoſopher of Italy. Great as have been the praiſes beſtowed on Bacon in his own country, they have never reached the high encomiums of foreign univerſities.

It was the great miſtake of Ariſtotle, to have accommodated his phyſics to his logic, inſtead of rendering his logic ſubſervient to his phyſics, and, as the critics have obſerved, by inverting the natural order of things, to have ſubjected the end to the means. To remove this error, our philoſopher invented his *NOVUM ORGANUM*, in which he teaches to reaſon by induction; a more effectual method of eliciting truth, than the antiquated and trifling forms of a
perfect

perfect syllogism. This work is acknowledged to be his masterpiece; and the beneficial effect it has had in ascertaining science, by reducing it to the test of experiment, is alone sufficient to entitle him to all the fame he enjoys.

His predominant excellence in promoting science, seems almost to have absorbed his glory as a moralist. But his genius, formed to penetrate into all subjects on which it directed its beams, made acute discoveries in common life and common manners, which, it might be supposed, would be less likely to occur to the deep speculator than to the man of business. There is a solidity of remark in all his moral writings, which enables the reader to select something useful on every perusal. It is this original and substantial excellence, which gives a grace to his writings, not to be deformed by a style by no means uniformly elegant; though Sir Richard Baker, whose taste, however, was not equal to his knowledge, asserts of it, that Bacon has sometimes

that Bacon has sometimes written in so sweet a style, that, like manna, it pleases every palate.

Men of profound science commonly excel more in judgment than in wit. But Bacon is acknowledged to have displayed a very considerable degree of wit in his moral lucubrations. Rapin says, there is more of it in his ethics, than in any of his writings; for which, I think, a reason may easily be assigned. Observations on men and manners admit a playful ingenuity of thought; but the features of severe science are not to be relaxed by the fallies of a sportive fancy.

I have often regretted, that so sagacious an understanding was not more frequently employed in speculations more generally useful, than those sublime subjects of science which are unconnected with practice. Had he employed that subtilty of observation, in remarking and describing manners, which is conspicuous in some useless conjectures in natural philosophy, there

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is little doubt but the world would have received great light, where light is most wanted, in the regulation of our passions, and the conduct of life. The little he has left us is an invaluable treasure; and the work I should most wish to recover, if all his productions were lost, is the *Moral Essays*.

The Advancement of Learning, though much less read than the superficial works of later times, is one of the most entertaining and improving books in the language. The remarks strike the mind with such an evidence of conviction, that the truth discovered pleases like that derived from mathematical demonstration. His thoughts not only please and convince by their justness, but lead the mind to think still farther on the subject, and assist it in its efforts. Not like the trifling writer, who is forced to make the most advantage of a good idea, he leaves the reader to comment on a solid reflection, when he has once given it utterance.

His

His reputation as an historian, though great during his life, seems gradually to have declined, and is now nearly lost. His Reign of Henry the Seventh is only read by those whose veneration for him induces them to acquaint themselves with all his works.

Whatever defects the prevalence of a bad taste may have occasioned in some of his productions, we may compare them all together to a venerable pile of gothic architecture, which, though it has not to boast the grace of Grecian elegance, possesses a solidity and substance, which will cause it to endure when not one stone shall be left upon another in the gaudy edifices of more refined taste.

When we compare this great man's writings with his life, we are tempted to exclaim with a modern delineator of characters, Alas, poor human nature!

E S S A Y XXV.

ON THE PROFESSIONS.

MUCH has been said on the necessity of discovering the genius at a puerile age, and of consulting nature in the choice of a profession. Yet, after all, chance usually determines the boy's destination.

It is, indeed, by no means easy to find in the child the distinguishing excellence of the future man. The mind, in the course of a few years, appears to undergo a total renovation. Different faculties, like different trees, put forth the blossoms which presage the fruit, at earlier or later periods, according to some interior arrangement, which eludes research. They who have taken the
most

most pains to learn the natural propensity of the young mind, and have been led by some striking appearance to chuse a future employment for it, have found their pupils no more skilful or successful, than they who were directed to the same plan by fortuitous circumstances. Few parents, and few superintendants of common education, are capable of forming this judgment; a judgment that must proceed from an intimate knowledge of the human heart, and a long experience of the changes produced in it by time and accidents.

But it is less difficult to discover the advantages and disadvantages of the various employments of life, than to point out those who are formed by nature to fill them with honour.

The clerical profession seems to be well adapted to promote the happiness of him who can command his passions, and who is of a contented disposition. He is a christian philosopher, and possesses the agreeable privilege of instruct-

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ing his fellow-creatures in moral, philosophical, and religious truth. He is at liberty to pursue one of the pleasantest and the most tranquil paths of life, that which leads through the diversified regions of learning. He is usually respected much more than those whose birth and fortunes place them in a higher sphere. He is more a master of his time, that invaluable possession, than the rest of the busy world, because his engagements are at an appointed season. But if to accumulate money, either from the necessity of providing for a family, or from avarice, be his object, he will find himself miserable, because he is placed in a situation where his desire cannot be gratified with ease and honour. The stipends of the most useful part of the clergy, those who officiate, are seldom greater than the earnings of the lowest mechanic. Yet an appearance of a competency must be supported, not from pride, but from a laudable design of accomplishing the purposes of his profession. In vain will
he

he preach*, in vain will he set a good example, if his appearance and mode of living contradict the received opinions of congruity, and produce contempt. Rich preferments there are; but these, it is observed, do not, in the present age, fall to merit as the reward of it, but are lavished where interest and family connection put in their irresistible claim. They seem to be considered as supplemental provisions for the younger brothers of opulent families. He, therefore, who has neither interest nor connections, must learn, when he enters on this profession, to view this world's goods in the light in which they have been considered by the wisest and best of mortals.

More families have been raised to civil eminence by the study of the law, than by any other pursuit. Riches and honours have been profusely accumulated on its successful professors. The mul-

* — *rara in tenui facundia panno.*

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tiplication of statutes, and the variety of forms in modern times, have indeed rendered the study uncommonly intricate, and it seems therefore to merit uncommon rewards. But distinguished success is necessarily confined to few, and many have worn out a good constitution in perusing books of all others the least amusing, without any return of honour or of profit. In this age the profession is overrun by the multitude of nominal, if not real students. Formerly the heir to a good estate was brought up to little else than fox-hunting; and to be in at the death, and to water the *quorum* ten miles round, were the objects of his highest ambition; but now he is usually entered at an inn of court, advised to read Blackstone, called to the bar, never gets a brief, returns to his paternal mansion, considers himself as an instance of neglected merit, and grows melancholy. When, after a life of useful labour, the advocate is rewarded with a judge's appointment, his labour does not cease. Ease, his proper recompence, remains

remains still at a distance. Perhaps, during the time of business, there are few employments more irksome and unhealthy. The truly valuable rewards are indeed seldom obtained in the law, till age and application have weakened the powers of perception; and when these are decayed, what are external advantages? Upon the whole, we may conclude, that though the profession of the law, when attended with success, is well adapted to raise and establish a family, it is seldom consistent with personal tranquillity.

The preparation for the practice of physic is by no means agreeable. A philosopher may indeed attend a dissection with pleasure, as affording an opportunity for the observation of nature; but it must always be disgusting to view the loathsome objects of an infirmary. Yet this discipline is necessary; for books alone are of little use. After all the expence and labour of education, it is mortifying to the sensibility of merit to observe those chiefly encouraged, who have little else to recommend them than confidence

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confidence and external grace of behaviour. He whose solid knowledge induces him to speak with diffidence on the success of a prescription, is thought by the generality less able than the bold pretender. With all his physiological knowledge, if he has not the address to conciliate the whims of fashion on his side, his sense of feeling will never be soothed by the grateful application of a fee. Men of sense may respect him, but his chariot is to be kept on its wheels by fools. When, however, he is sufficiently employed, it must be an additional pleasure to the natural satisfaction of success, to find his own emolument arising from giving ease to the distressed. Yet it is by no means adviseable, that any should be trained to this precarious profession, who do not possess such a degree of independence, as may enable them to be easy under the neglect of a capricious world.

The army affords a fine asylum for those spirits, which are too restless for domestic life. But though it has many charms

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charms for a warm imagination, it seems little adapted to give solid comfort at any time, much less in the season of infirmity and in old age. It is happy for the commonwealth, that the acknowledged gentility of the profession obliterates the sense of its hardships.

Still less suited to afford tranquil pleasure, the navy is yet always supplied even by those who have ease and affluence at home. To be confined with a crowd for many months in a wooden machine, is a situation which nothing but use and example could render tolerable. This lot, however, must fall to some; and it does not appear, that they to whom it has fallen are less happy than the rest of mankind. Providence wisely fits the disposition to external circumstances.

The employment of merchandise is commonly esteemed less liberal than any of these; and it is true, that the preparation for it, and the arts of keeping and improving money, have a tendency to contract the sentiments. The other

professions have some connection with public spirit, with science and philanthropy. The trader's views seem to centre in private emolument; and, though he is highly beneficial to the community, it seems not from intention; on the contrary, he appears ever ready to take advantage of it without injury to his character, and consequently to his interest. Yet it must be confessed, that, in our commercial country, and in the present age, the mercantile orders have frequently shewn themselves truly honourable and enlightened; and he would act imprudently and ridiculously, who should slight a good opportunity of introducing his son to a successful merchandise, merely because it has not been held so liberal as the profession of him who starves with a doctor's degree.

All the occupations of life are found to have their advantages and disadvantages admirably adapted to preserve the just equilibrium of happiness. This we may confidently assert, that,

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that, whatever are the inconveniencies of any of them, they are all preferable to a state of inaction; to that wretched listlessness which is constrained to pursue pleasure as a business, and, by rendering it the object of severe attention, to destroy its very essence.

E S S A Y XXVI.

ON SIMPLICITY OF STYLE IN
PROSAIC COMPOSITION.

Grandis et, ut ita dicam, pudica oratio, non
est maculosa, nec turgida; sed naturali pulchri-
tudine exurgit. PETRONIUS.

FOOD that gives the liveliest plea-
sure on the first taste, frequently
disgusts on repetition; and those things
which please the palate without satiety,
are such as agitate but moderately, and
perhaps originally caused a disagreeable
sensation. Mental food is also found
by experience to nourish best, and de-
light the longest, when it is not luscio-
usly sweet. Profuse ornament and
unnecessary graces, though they may
transport

transport the reader on a first perusal, commonly occasion a kind of intellectual surfeit, which prevents a second.

Immoderate embellishment is the mark of a puerile taste, of a weak judgment, and a little genius. It conveys the idea of too great a labour to please; an idea, which excludes the appearance of ease, without which it is difficult to effect the purpose of pleasing. If the reader enters into the author's spirit, he finds his emotions too rapidly excited to be consistent with pleasurable feelings. Works acknowledged to be written with true taste, are found for the most part to raise gentle emotions; and, when it is necessary to call up the more violent, the effect is improved from the rarity of the attempt. There is a certain equable flow of spirits, which keeps the mind in a tone for the admission of durable pleasure; but which, when hurried or exalted beyond its natural state, terminates in disgust.

There

There are several books very popular in the present age, among the youthful and the inexperienced, which have a sweetness that palls on the taste, and a grandeur that swells to a bloated turgidity. Such are the writings of some modern Germans. The Death of Abel is generally read, and preferred by many to all the productions of Greece, Rome, and England. The success of this work has given rise to others on the same plan, inferior to this in its real merits, and labouring under the same fault of redundant decoration. What others may feel, I know not; but I would no more be obliged to read the works of Gesner repeatedly, than to make a frequent meal on the honey-comb.

The meditations of Harvey, and many books of devotion, are written in that rhapsodic style, which wearies by its constant efforts to elevate the mind to extacy. They have, it is true, an useful effect on the rude and uncultivated, who are seldom penetrated but by forcible impressions; but the pleasure they
give

give is not sufficiently elegant and refined to attach the more polished reader.

Poetical prose, as all such writings may be called, seems by no means correspondent to classical ideas of beauty. There is no model of it among writers in the golden ages, and it has seldom been attempted by the first rank of moderns. Fenelon indeed succeeded in it, but he richly intermixed the beautiful flowers originally culled by Homer and Virgil. Genius, assisted by classical learning, can give a grace to compositions formed on a plan not quite conformable to the most approved taste.

Many modern sermons, while their authors aimed at sublimity and a highly figurative eloquence, have become turgid and affected. The simple majesty of the sacred writings affords a proper model for sacred oratory; and it must be owned, to the honour of the regular clergy, that they have commonly imitated it; and that the high-flown, enthusiastic, and pompous harangue has usually been the production of those who

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have

have renounced reason in matters of taste as well as of religion. Addressed to the meanest capacities in the lowest orders, it may have produced a desirable effect in compelling their attention, and in warming their inflammable passions. But, it is to be feared, its effect was but temporary, and it is certain that it can never possess a place among the elegant works of literature.

It is agreeable to the mind to be occasionally roused by a powerful stroke; but it suffers a kind of smart, from a continual repetition of the blow. It is merely teased and wearied by the feeble yet uninterrupted attack of the impotent writer, whose inclination stimulates while genius flags.

The Bible, the Iliad, and Shakespeare's works are allowed to be the sublimest books that the world can exhibit. They are also truly simple; and the reader is the more affected by their indisputable sublimity, because his attention is not wearied by ineffectual attempts at it. He who is acquainted with Longinus

will remember, that the instances adduced by that great pattern of the excellence he describes, are not remarkable for a glaring or a pompous style, but derive their claim to sublimity from a noble energy of thought, modestly set off by a proper expression.

No author has been more universally approved than Xenophon. Yet his writings display no appearance of splendour or majesty; nothing elevated or adorned with figures; no affectation of superfluous ornament. His merit is an unaffected sweetness, which no affectation can obtain. The graces seem to have conspired to form the becoming texture of his composition. And yet, perhaps, a common reader would neglect him, because the easy and natural air of his narrative rouses no violent emotion. More refined understandings peruse him with delight; and Cicero has recorded that Scipio, when once he had opened the books of Xenophon, would with difficulty be prevailed with to close them. His style, says the same great

260 ON SIMPLICITY OF STYLE

orator and critic, is sweeter than honey, and the muses themselves seem to have spoken from his mouth.

Julius Cæsar is thought to have resembled him in his style, as he did in the circumstance of profession. He has nothing florid or grand, but, like a gentle river, flows on with a surface unruffled. A wonderful instance of moderation, to have recounted his own achievements with accuracy, yet without being, for a moment, betrayed into an unbecoming pomp either of diction or representation. Yet with all the gracefulness of modesty and simplicity, he has an air of grandeur that commands respect. Ostentatious ornament would indeed have been contemptible deformity.

Cicero, who understood and valued the simplicity of Xenophon, was, however, himself sometimes guilty of its violation. He adopted the Asiatic manner in some of his orations, and they are sometimes more verbose, diffuse, and affected, than an attic taste can patiently endure. But it is a kind of sacrilege, as well as presumption,

sumption, to detract from the deserved glory of a man, who in his life and writings advanced human nature to the highest perfection.

The French nation is an affected nation; but many of their authors have written with remarkable simplicity. Fontaine and Fontenelle are acknowledged to have equalled in this beauty the ancient models. They have, however, writers of the other kind, and I must own, I never could admire many of their boasted orators. Even their Bossuet and their Bourdaloue are not adapted to the taste of an English or an Attic audience.

Simplicity is not in general the distinguishing beauty of English writers. Their spirit and solemnity of disposition have sometimes given their writings an ill-placed pomp and magnificence. But the works of an Addison and a Sterne, and the reception they have met with, will vindicate the nation from the charge of wanting taste for simple beauty. The ancients have been much imitated in

England; and where that is the case, a taste for simplicity will sometimes get the better of prevailing gothicism. The German manner, it is hoped, will not supplant the Attic.

To write in a plain manner appears easy in theory; but how few in comparison have avoided the fault of unnecessary and false ornament! The greater part seem to have mistaken unwieldy corpulence for robust vigour, and to have despised the temperate habit of sound health as meagreness. The taste for finery is more general than for symmetrical beauty and chaste elegance; and many, like Nero, would not be content till they had spoiled, by gilding it, the statue of a Lyfippus.

ESSAY XXVII.

ON AFFECTATION OF THE CHARACTER OF SPORTSMEN.

Gaudet equis canibusque.——

HOR.

He loves you best of all things, save his horse.

POPE.

ANIMALS that are hurtful to man, and are therefore destroyed by him, seem to have an instinctive knowledge of their enemy, and avoid his approach before they can have experienced his power or his contrivance. Man likewise possesses a counteracting instinct, which leads him to the recesses of the forest, and bears him with alacrity through all the dangers and fatigues of a chase.

This instinct was necessary to his subsistence, as well as defence, in the savage state; for the prey that he caught was his only food. Implanted in his constitution, it continues to operate with great force, even when he is advanced to a state in which his wants are supplied by the inventions of civilised life. The hunter, even in these days, pursues the prey with an instinctive ardour, no less blind and impetuous than that which impels the hounds that accompany him. With all his boasted superiority of reason, he then appears merely an animal destroying a less sagacious brute, to obey the impulse of his hunger.

In our country, where every improvement of life is advanced to an exalted height, the instinct of the hunter is not obliterated by the new propensities superinduced in a state of civilization. There is scarcely an individual of those who are not refined to a very uncommon degree, but delights in the sports of the field. The rich must not flatter themselves with an idea that their taste is peculiar to themselves;

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themselves; for there is no taste more vulgar, more prevalent among the lowest orders, than the taste for destroying noxious animals, protected by the legislature for the amusement of the wealthy. The mechanic leaves, without remorse, the employment which is to support himself and his family, to follow the Esquire in the chace of a fox, and would rather shoot a pheasant or insnare a trout, than earn a guinea. The glee with which he recounts the adventures of the pursuit, proves it to be a pleasure congenial to his heart.

A wise politician, who did not wish to monopolise the delights of the chace, would encourage this taste among the vagabond and the unemployed. For besides its utility in the destruction of vermin, it tends to infuse a spirit, a hardiness, and a subtilty, well suited to qualify such persons for the dangers and the hardships, the contrivances and the stratagems, of a naval and military life. A man who is excluded from more liberal employments by the lowness of his station, may render himself a useful-

member of society by catching moles and hares, rats and foxes.

But it is really no less ridiculous than lamentable, that the heir to an estate, the man of education, should forego the honours and pleasures of social, civil, literary exertions, merely to enjoy the delight of joining a pack of hounds in the destruction of a helpless animal. Yet the truth is, this instinct operates with the greatest violence among those whose opportunities for improvement might enable them to subdue every less laudable relique of savage humanity. The nobles of our land, whose example might have a salutary influence in disseminating every useful quality, are often destitute of all ideas of excellence beyond the sphere of a stable. They indeed indulge their propensity without controul. The laws are on their side, and the poor man is prevented from destroying the vermin that fattens on his substance. The game laws are, however, confessed by those who enact them to be a disgrace to an enlightened age.

At

At the same time that they infringe on liberty, they argue a very considerable degree of barbarism.

The love of rural sports, with all their appendages of horses, dogs, and jockies, is at present carried so far, that the gentleman by birth labours to lower himself to the rank of a huntsman, and even dresses himself in the garb of an ostler. It would not, in the present day, be surprising to meet a privy-counsellor in leather breeches, and a judge in a jockey-cap.

And why should they be censured, says the pretender to superior reason? Is a man less honest or less learned, according to any difference in his exterior? It is certain that, if the world were filled with philosophers, it would be a circumstance of little moment. But every thing that lowers the great in the eyes of the vulgar, injures society by disturbing the settled climax of subordination. The vulgar are awed into submission by no methods so effectually, as by a respectable outside. Were a clergyman,

clergyman, for instance, to ascend the pulpit in the dress of a postilion, he might speak with the tongue of an angel, and yet be disregarded. His appearance, even on other occasions, in the livery of a sportsman, though it may recommend him to his patron, will degrade him among his parishioners.

The influence of dress on manners is considerable, though not much attended to by the moralist. Horace indeed relates, that when Eutrapelus wished to do any one an injury, he gave him fine clothes*. The cause of an effect thus produced in the disposition by the external habit, is, that the mind insensibly adopts something of the character it personates. There is a natural love of congruity, which requires the behaviour to correspond with the dress. He who assumes all the externals of low life, will soon exhibit proofs of internal abasement. If the peer condescends to spend his days in a stable, and to dress like his

* — Eutrapelus cuicumque nocere volebat
Vestimenta dabat pretiosa.

groom,

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groom, he will soon differ from him in those circumstances alone which render his degeneracy more conspicuous and detestable. It will not be thought calumny to assert, that our own times can exhibit some melancholy examples of this disgraceful humiliation.

A taste for the pleasures of the race is indeed justified by the example of a most refined people. But the Greeks, it is imagined, did not adopt it as affording an opportunity for gaming. In our age and nation it is warmly patronised by the illustrious and noble; but it is also frequented by those who come to take advantage of their superiors folly. And these, by a strange event, are admitted to familiarity with the great, whose wealth they pillage, and whose principles they corrupt.

Rural sports, also, when not pursued with an attention greater than their importance will admit, afford a healthy and a manly relaxation. But when all the circumstances which relate to them are considered with a seriousness, and
pursued

pursued with an ardour which momentous business only can justify, the moralist cannot help lamenting that so much useful industry is misplaced. When they lead the rich and liberal into company and occupations which degrade their dignity, he cannot but express an indignant sentiment. He sees with regret, at a time when national virtue is particularly required, those who have most influence in a nation, totally engaged with dogs, horses, and grooms.

To value a noble animal for its use, to admire it for its beauty and swiftness, to love it for its generous alacrity in the service of man, is natural and reasonable. It is indeed the mark of an amiable disposition, to observe and to be pleased with the manners and actions of the poor animals whom nature has subjected to our command. If fidelity and generosity are lovely qualities, the dog and the horse have a peculiar claim to a share of affection. But they who circumscribe

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scribe their ideas within the verge of a stable, who prefer the company of their irrational animals to the society of a fellow-creature, seem to be in danger of gradually affmilating with their nature, and of acquiring a degree of brutal ferocity.

E S S A Y XXVIII.

ON SOME OF THE MINOR ENGLISH
POETS.

WE are told in the epistle to the Pisos, that poetical mediocrity is intolerable; yet we find that Poets of inferior merit as well as fame, are read with pleasure.

It is true, indeed, that the loudest melody of the grove is poured forth by the lark, the blackbird, the thrush, and the nightingale; but it is no less true, that their pauses are often filled by the sweet warblings of the linnet and the red-breast. The lofty cedar that waves on the summit of the poetic mountain, seems to overshadow, and exclude by its luxuriance, all other vegetation.

vegetation. He, however, who approaches it, will find many a violet and primrose springing at its root. He will often discover, amid a plentiful growth of weeds, a modest flowret lifting its humble head, and becoming more beautiful by seeming to conceal the native sweetness of its odour, and the lustre of its hues.

The first dignities in the commonwealth of letters are pre-occupied by such writers as Spenser, Milton, Dryden, and Pope; but, at the same time, the numerous subaltern stations are frequently filled with honour.

Many Poets of original beauty were originally so obscure as to be now totally unknown. Such are the authors of our most popular ballads, the general reception of which is a proof of their excellence, more convincing than the decisions of criticism. The learned Poet has commonly owed much of his excellence to imitation; but the ballad-writer drew only from his own resources when he sung the wild wood-notes of nature. Their metre often

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possesses a kind of harmony quite different from classical versification, indeed, yet, at the same time, pleasing to the uncorrupted ear.

Of Poets once known and admired, several are fallen into total disrepute. Drayton was honoured by a commentator who must have given fame to any writer. If Selden's taste was equal to his learning, Drayton is indeed most highly distinguished. The *Polyolbion* is, however, no more read; and the flow length of the tedious alexandrine in which it is written, will prevent its revival, as it has hastened its oblivion.

The *Gondibert* of D'Avenant has been the subject of critical controversy from the time of its publication. Its plan was originally defended by the great Hobbes, and its execution has been greatly praised. Yet few have attended to it with pleasure, and still fewer have had a degree of patience sufficient to bear them through the perusal of it. The truth is, the stanza which he adopted, is better suited to elegiac than

than to heroic poetry. A beautifully descriptive passage interspersed in the course of two or three hundred lines, will not alleviate the tedium of the rest. An occasional flash of lightning cannot illuminate the continued gloominess of the whole prospect.

For the honour of English literature, most of the poetical productions which were admired in the reign of Charles, should now be consigned to everlasting oblivion. They display, indeed, much genius and a sportiveness of fancy, but they are incorrect and licentious beyond the example of any age. Some of the best poets of the times, among whom were Mulgrave, Dorset, and Roscommon, though possessed of wit and taste, produced nothing worthy of immortality. The morals of the age were as licentious as the taste; and the love of pleasure introduced an indolence, which admitted not an application sufficient to give the last polish of correct elegance.

The study of the antients, and of the French, has gradually refined the national taste to a degree of fastidious delicacy; and writers who possessed classical beauty were read, even though they had nothing to recommend them to the notice of a Charles the Second or a Sedley.

The number of minor poets who displayed great merit, yet who seem to have derived it all from imitation, is too tedious to recapitulate. Philips and his friend Smith were correct and classical in a degree superior to their contemporaries. Philips has performed the task of imitation, with an accuracy of resemblance scarcely equalled by any of his followers but Browne. The *Phædra* and *Hippolitus* of Smith has ever been esteemed a fine poem, and the beauty of the style and harmony of the verse induce us to regret that he lived to finish so few productions.

Within the space of half the last century, a desire to imitate the excellent models of our more celebrated bards, has crowded

crowded the middle ranks with a multitude too great to obtain, even for the deserving individual, any very distinguished fame. One Poet has arisen after another, and supplanted him as the succeeding wave seems to swallow up the wave that went before*. Most of them have exhibited an harmonious versification, and have selected a profusion of splendid expressions; but have in general been deficient in that noble fire, and those simple graces, which mark originality of genius. They are, however, read with pleasure, and sweetly fill up the intervals of avocation among the busy and commercial world, who are not acquainted with the Greeks and Romans, and with whom novelty possesses the charm of beauty.

There is a force and solemnity in the poems of Tickell, which at least place him on a level with his patron as a poet. His *Colin and Lucy* is one of the most sweetly pathetic poems in the language.

* ——— velut unda supervenit undam. Hor.

Broome, though honourably associated with Pope in the work of translation, seems to have had scarcely any other merit than this to bear him down the stream of time.

Trapp wrote Latin verse with elegance, and was a good critic; but it has been observed of his Virgil, that he had done wisely to have stopped at his preface.

The genius of Collins seems in some measure to have resembled that of Tickell. Dignity, solemnity, and pathos, are the striking features of his compositions. None but a true poet could have written the song over Fidele in Shakespeare's Cymbeline.

The English Tibullus, Hammond, has written truly elegant verse; but I know not whether his representations greatly affect the heart, though they are approved by the judgment and imagination. They have, however, served as patterns for the love-sick nymphs and swains who delight in giving vent to their passion in the language of poetry.

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Love and its effects were beautifully described by the elegantly sensible Lord Lyttelton. To assert that he was remarkable for poetical genius, were to lessen by endeavouring to exaggerate his praise. Force, fire, and an exuberance of invention, were not his excellences; but that equable beauty of sentiment and diction, which results from an elegant mind. The graces distinguish his compositions, as the virtues marked his honourable life.

Moore's Fables display indubitable marks of genius; but he wants the simplicity of Gay and Fontaine. He shews, however, a talent for description, which would have shone in the higher kinds of poetry; and a delicacy of mind, which, it might be supposed, could be acquired only in a higher sphere than that in which he was born.

Genius and learning were possessed in a very eminent degree by Merrick. He had that peculiar kind of genius which qualified him to excel in the department of sacred poetry. It is to be

wished, that his version of the Psalms were adopted in churches, not only in the place of Sternhold and Hopkins, but of Brady and Tate. Such an event would be no less advantageous to piety, than to taste.

There is a vein of original thought and description in the poems of Matthew Green; and an animation of style in those of Cawthorn, which, though they entitle them to a considerable share of poetical reputation, scarcely excuse their incorrectness and inequality.

Gray and Mason will hardly be classed among the minor Poets. To speak indeed of living writers with freedom, is in general an invidious task. It is however happy, that the most impartial critic may concur with the world in praising a Glover, the Wartons, an Ansty, a Roberts, an Armstrong, and a Barbauld. These and several more would have shone with very distinguished splendor, if they had not obscured the separate glory of each other, by the general lustre of their united radiance.

Whatever

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Whatever may be the merit of the minor Poets, as it is subordinate merit, it is perhaps rather unfavourable to the prevalence of good taste, that they are more generally read than the fathers of English poetry. The Book-feller's Miscellany may lie on our table for occasional perusal, but must not supersede the volumes of Spenser, Milton, Garth, Dryden, and Pope.

We may congratulate the Public on the late edition of the great English Poets complete. The portable size in which they appear, besides their other advantages, will cause them to be much more read than hitherto. A convenient form and external elegance contribute greatly to the general diffusion of volumes, the intrinsic merit of which would seem not to want mechanical recommendation.

ESSAY XXIX.

ON THE NECESSITY OF AN ATTENTION
TO THINGS AS WELL AS BOOKS.

————— insenuitque
Libris et curis; statuâ taciturniûs exit
Plerumque, et risu populum quatit. ———
HOR.

SIR,

AFTER thirty years constant residence at the university, I thought myself supremely happy, when I was at last presented by my college to a living worth two hundred a year. During so long a period, I had treasured up many ideas for the regulation of my future conduct, and congratulated myself, that my theory was now to be reduced to practice.

I found

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I found my parsonage-house a large antiquated building, in a delightful situation, and capable of very great improvement. I had been used to see every thing around me in the best order, and had acquired a love of external decency in all the articles of dress and habitation. I sent therefore without hesitation for the builder, and gave him an unlimited order to repair every thing in a style of becoming elegance. The work was done entirely to my mind, and I had nothing to find fault with but the bill, which came to three times the sum mentioned in the estimate, and almost exhausted my purse of the little savings in a collegiate life.

My garden was laid out in gravel walks intersecting each other at right angles, and its only ornament was a few yew-trees clipped into peacocks. I ordered every tree and plant to be rooted up, the walks to be turned to serpentine, and the whole to be planted with the most beautiful shrubs. A
close

close of about an acre at the bottom lay so contiguous, that it tempted me to add it to the garden. No labour or ingenuity was spared, and I own I felt a little satisfaction in a consciousness of possessing the grounds about me in a taste superior to the Esquire himself. In the ardour of reformation it did not occur, that I was not only expending more than I could afford, but involving myself in a necessity of keeping an additional and skilful servant, constantly to superintend my improvements. I had neglected utility for ornaments, and had planted the fir and the laurel instead of the olitory. After incurring some ridicule of the neighbourhood, I was obliged to change my shrubbery to a cabbage-garden, and to resume my close as pasture-ground for my poney.

I no sooner settled than it was suggested to me by an attorney who wanted business, that my living was worth much more than I should receive, and that I owed it to myself and successors to receive the tythes in kind. I entered
on

on the project with great zeal, built a barn, and bought a cart; but in a meeting of farmers, not one of whom could read or write his own name, I was talked out of the scheme, and prevailed on to let my living for life, two-thirds under its real value.

In some of my accidental visits, I was cunningly informed, that there was in the neighbourhood a lady of fortune, who in every respect was well qualified to make me an agreeable partner for life, and who appeared to have a partiality for the clergy. My hopes were raised to a great height, and upon introduction I found, notwithstanding some artful behaviour, that I should soon succeed. I married her, and found, to my smart, that she was no less deficient in temper and understanding, than in the fortune which had been talked of. She was not the choice of my heart, but imposed upon me by a kind of fatal necessity; and I therefore submitted to my lot with the patience of a Socrates.

I had

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I had ever entertained exalted ideas of the utility and pleasure of old English hospitality, and had promised myself a plentiful table whenever I should become master of a house. The best of wines, the best of provisions were brought to it, and these were allurements that prevented the possibility of its being deserted. The neighbouring gentlemen liked both my port and ale, and I was so happy as to give them satisfaction with my Madeira; a circumstance which, though it pleased them and me at the time, was a subject of some uneasiness to my wine-merchant, who found that a pipe a year was a great tax on an annual income of two hundred pounds.

The baker's, butcher's, and maltster's bills were a kind of manuscripts never met with in the Bodleian, and to the perusal of which I was quite unused. I had much rather have collated a dozen Greek copies, than have cast up a sum consisting of twenty articles. This disinclination soon introduced a
perplexity

perplexity in my accounts, which I was too indolent to unravel, till at last an accumulation of debt required a degree of œconomy to which my spirit could with difficulty submit.

In the silent retreat of my college chamber, the noise of children had never invaded my ear. I had been used for thirty years to scarcely any interruption, save the tinkling of the chapel and the dinner bell; and it is difficult to express the horrors I suffered in listening to the cries of my little girl, and the prattle of nurses, while my folios lay unopened before me. All I knew of the infant state was collected from poets and philosophers; from whom I had learned that all was mild, placid, and sweet, in the native manners of the infant. Amid the din, which was seldom interrupted, night or day, how often did I with myself transported to the blissful region of the common room fire-side. Delightful retreat, where never female shewed her head since the days of the founder!

There

There was one circumstance attending my new situation, which, though only an imaginary evil, gave me at first a sensible mortification. As a senior fellow, I was a little monarch within the verge of my college. The statutes had required, that persons of the lower degrees should pass before me, nay, stand in the quadrangle whenever I was present, with heads uncovered. From this general obeisance, and from many other circumstances, I had been led to conceive myself a person of great importance. I was so, indeed, in the circumscribed limits of my society. But the misfortune was, that I could not easily free myself from the consciousness of it when no longer a member. I own it was a weakness; yet perhaps a pardonable one, because it was occasioned by my peculiar situation, that I felt myself hurt if any of my parishioners went by me without paying great respect, and that the Lord of the manor considered himself as my superior. I had to discover, by experience, the

truth of what the poet has said, that the learned pate must duck to the wealthy fool.

Though by no means remarkable for diffidence, I felt myself awkward and uneasy, when admitted into the company of those who were styled the polite. I had thought and read upon most subjects; yet I found my remarks less attended to than those of the confessedly illiterate. Matter I possessed; but the manner was wanting. That easy kind of trifling, which pleases without fatiguing the attention of the superficial, was not among my academical acquirements. Thus with inclination and some ability to join in general conversation and intercourse, I was reduced to a state of solitude, and wished in vain for the frank and good-natured associates of the common room.

Upon the whole, my condition is far less happy and less respectable, than I had reason to expect. I have dis-

U covered,

covered, when it is almost too late, that I had confined my views within too narrow limits, by attending only to the affairs of a college. I have learned the necessity of studying things with all the attention paid to an abstruse science; and will recommend it to those whose prospects in life are similar to mine, to devote some part of their time to the consideration of common affairs; of a few mechanic arts, such as concern building, repairing, gardening; of agriculture, and of the manners of husbandmen. They will thus not only spend the close of their life with more pleasure to themselves, but will more effectually accomplish the ends of the clerical profession.

Of the imprudence of a contrary conduct, I stand a melancholy instance. I am left alone, at a time when the amusement of companions is most wanted to help out the last stage in the journey of life. I remain

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in a total ignorance of the world, at a period when others are become wise by experience; and I am involved in the mistakes of youth, without its amiable qualities to palliate them.

E S S A Y XXX.

ON THE AMUSEMENT OF MUSIC.

MOST of the pleasurable diversions have a tendency, when pursued with ardour, not only to relax, but to enervate the mind. They indispose for manly virtue, and introduce a tenderness, ill suited to encounter the usual asperities of life. But the study of Music, while it sweetly soothes the sense of hearing, touches the soul, and elevates and refines its nature. Conducted by philosophy, it is able to infuse the noblest thoughts, to urge to the most animated action, to calm the ruffled spirits, and to eradicate every malignant propensity.

Amid

Amid the invectives thrown out against the dissipated manners of the present age, its taste for Music deserves applause. Even as a source of sensual pleasure, it is one of the purest and most dignified; yet it may be lamented, that it is chiefly cultivated as a sensual pleasure; because that which titillates the ear, is not always the best calculated to affect the heart. Simple music, for which the present age seems to have little relish, is capable of producing the most violent effects on the sentiments; and the neglect of it is the cause that the mind is often little interested in the most celebrated compositions.

He who has made music the study of his life, and possesses an ear refined by application to fastidious delicacy, is pleased with the nice productions of the Italian composer. But let the admired composition be performed in the hearing of another whose natural powers are equally sensible, but who has been used to the works of Purcell and

Handel, and he will find his ear not greatly delighted, and his heart totally unaffected.

The kind of music, however excellent as a piece of art, which penetrates no farther than the ear, produces an effect quite different from that originally intended by the invention. As a pleasure of the sense, though elegant in a high degree, it yet contributes to increase imbecillity. The inartificial music of the drum, at which the connoisseur might be enraged, is better able to produce the genuine effects of music, lively emotions of mind, than the fine modulations of a Fischar's hautboy.

Of what kind is the music that delights those who are stigmatised by the name of vulgar, but who possess all the faculties of perception, in a state undepraved by artificial refinement? These are the unaltered sons of nature; and the sounds which universally please them, are those which nature intended should please, and for which she adapted the

the finely susceptible sense. The drum, the fife, the trumpet, the harp, the bagpipe, and the dulcimer, are the instruments which inspire the lower ranks with joy and with courage, and which alleviate the sense of the greatest labours and the greatest dangers. If we were to suppose a Giardini condescending to play at a rural fair, there is little doubt but his audience would be stolen away from him by the itinerant performer on a Scotch bagpipe.

There are certain ballads and certain tunes adapted to them, which are known to almost every individual in a nation, and which please on every repetition. The music as well as the poetry of these, is simple in the extreme. The Scotch tunes have a sweetness which delights every ear unspoiled by the complex productions of laborious ingenuity, but which the Italian master knows not to intermix in his boasted works. And yet, nothing can be more natural and easy than the wild notes of the Highland swain.

There are also certain psalm tunes, which, with little merit as technical performances, are enabled to excite in the mind a great degree of devotional extacy. Those of the hundredth and the hundredth and fourth psalms, are the most popular music in England; and they are no less adapted to excite a spirit of piety, than to sooth the ear with their simple melody.

These observations are adduced with a view to recommend the adoption of a taste for simple music, among those who study music merely for the entertainment of a domestic circle, as well as among those who make it a profession. It appears to be more pleasing to the ear in its natural state, than the laboured and complicated productions of the modern musician; and experience abundantly proves, that it powerfully affects the heart and the imagination. If then it were received in those numerous families, where in the present age Music forms a constant diversion, its effect on the morals of the people

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would

would be truly important. It would elevate with piety, warm with generosity, and enlarge and ennoble, correct and purify every affection. There is scarcely any sentiment which may not be excited, increased, diminished, or modified by a piece of music, simple enough to be strongly expressive. Thus powerful as well as sweet, it is to be wondered at, as well as regretted, that it should be superseded by a species of harmony, ingenious indeed, yet possessing little other claim to attention, but as it affords an elegant amusement for a vacant hour. Music at present often forms a part of education; and it is to be lamented, that an accomplishment, which, when properly regulated, is most efficacious in filling the young mind with virtuous sentiments, should form only an innocent pastime and polite employment.

Paradoxical as it may appear, it is really true, that Music seems of late to be addressed to the eye as well

as to the ear*. Dexterity of execution, the wonderfully expeditious motion of the fingers, the hand, and the arm, cause an equal share of applause with the tones of the instrument. He who can hold his breath the longest, is proportionably honoured with the longest continuation of plaudits. The sweetest shepherd that ever piped on his Doric reed, would be less applauded than he who can make his pipe squeak five minutes without respiration. The lyre of Apollo would scarcely engage attention, while the finger of a modern was dancing on the strings of a violoncello. To attain to the excellence of rapid execution, requires the labour of a life; while a much less degree of application would enable a performer to ravish and captivate the heart, if the natural feelings were not set aside by adscititious taste.

* ——— migravit ab AURE voluptas
Omnis ad incertos oculos.

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It is often urged as a reason for neglecting the study and performance of Music, that to excel in it, to play in such a manner as not to offend a judge, requires a portion of time incompatible with an attention to more valuable acquirements. To arrive at this surprising expedition, this musical legerdemain, it is indeed necessary to do little else than scrape and pipe. But a comparatively moderate dexterity is sufficient to effect all the great purposes of Music, those of moving the passions in the cause of virtue, and of exciting sentiments of manly pleasure. Fortunately, the simple music, which is to produce these desirable effects, is the most easily performed. The most powerful influence of Music ever known, is recorded in the volumes of antiquity; but it is certain that the musical instruments of antiquity were simple in so great a degree, that it has perplexed the modern musician to discover how they were capable of producing a tolerable harmony. The feats of Timotheus, however, though
astonishing,

softening, are thought by many not to have been fabulous. He indeed who looks into the Opera-house after reading Dryden's Ode, will be induced, from the vacant countenance and sleepy eye, to judge that the musical art of Timotheus may be numbered among the lost arts in which antiquity excelled, and which the moderns ambitiously, yet vainly, imitate.

To produce the full effect of Music, it is necessary that the sister art which operates in conjunction with it, should not be united by a forced alliance. Good poetry and good music, each of which is separately powerful, acquire by union an irresistible force over the human heart. Yet every one knows, that many a fine piece of music is deformed by the most wretched rhymes that ever were tagged by a hungry poetaster. Songs we have in abundance, written by authors of acknowledged excellence; and it is surely a want of spirit to adopt, in preference to these, the nonsense which a musician has purchased

chased in Grub-street to be accompanied by his excellent melody. It is indeed to be wished, that the superior poets of the age would combine with the best composers of music, and do honour to themselves, and to the arts they love, in cementing so natural an union by a liberal communication of mutual assistance.

E S S A Y XXXI.

ON THE CHOICE OF BOOKS.

THE scarcity of Books, a few centuries ago, was the principal obstacle to the advancement of learning. The multitude of them is become, in the present age, scarcely less injurious to its interests, by distracting the student in his choice, and by diffusing an incorrect and undistinguishing taste.

To read all books on all subjects, would require an uninterrupted attention during the longest life even of an Antediluvian. To read only the most celebrated, written in a few languages, is an employment sufficient to fill up every hour of laborious application. For the sake then of saving time, and of directing the judgment of the inexperienced,

ON THE CHOICE OF BOOKS. 303

perienced, it becomes an useful attempt to suggest some hints, which may tend to facilitate selection.

One rule of the greatest consequence is, to read only or chiefly the original treatises in all the various departments of science, and of literature. The same space of time, though not the same degree of attention, is necessary to peruse the faint copies of imitative industry, as would appropriate the solid productions of native genius. This rule is more particularly to be observed on the first entrance on study. The foundation must ever be laid deep, and formed of solid materials. The superstructure will often admit slight and superficial appendages. When we have studied the fine reliques of those who have lived before us, we may derive much pleasure from attending to the additional labours of contemporary genius. But to begin with these is to found, like the fool recorded in the Gospel, an edifice in the sand.

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304 ON THE CHOICE OF BOOKS.

It were no less presumptuous than superfluous to address directions in the choice of authors, to the learned. But we may venture, without arrogance, to point out a few to the notice of the ingenuous pupil, with a design to abbreviate or facilitate his labour.

He who is entering on the study of divinity, will naturally devote his first attention to the scriptures. The original language of the Old Testament is often unknown even to the learned and ingenious; and notwithstanding what some critics have, as it were, officially observed on the subject, the neglect of it is seldom attended with much disadvantage. But the knowledge of Greek is indispensably necessary, if theology is pursued as a profession.

The prophetical parts will claim the greatest share of attention in the perusal of the Old Testament. Dr. Hurd's Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies will be a sufficient guide for subsequent application to them. To illustrate the New Testament, it will be proper to have
recourse

recourse to Percy's Key to it, to Trapp's Notes, to Locke on the Epistles, and to Mede on the Apocalypse. With these assistances the student, who is not deficient in natural ability, will make a competent proficiency, even though he should totally neglect those myriads of treatises which have rendered the body of divinity, as it is called, enormous beyond comprehension.

The student in physic is commonly introduced to the knowledge of it by a public lecturer, who superintends his course of reading. Natural and experimental science, in all their ramifications, are necessary to his further advancement. These alone will indeed render him ingenious in his closet, but will avail little at the bedside. To these must be added a most accurate observation of the human frame in all its fluctuations of health, disease, and convalescence. The reading of cases strictly delineated, is found to be the best succedaneum where actual practice and observation are precluded. System is in general delusive and insufficient.

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To the professed lawyer, scarcely any book on the subject of law is uninteresting or useless. But he who pursues the study merely as an accomplishment in a comprehensive plan of education, will find all the necessary lights in the volumes of Grotius, Puffendorf, Bourne, and Blackstone.

He who wishes to gain a complete knowledge of grammar, may succeed in his attempt without loading his memory with the works of Priscian, or of Despauterius, or of those thousands who have toiled in this circumscribed province. Let him, after having studied the elements of Latin and Greek, digest the Hermes of Harris, and the Introduction of Lowth.

The art of rhetoric never yet formed an English orator. It is one of those artificial assistances of genius, which genius wants not, and of which dulness can little avail itself. But as there are excellent books written on it, the general scholar must pay it his attention. Let him then read Cicero on the Orator, and Quintilian's Institutes, and he need
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not trouble himself with those meagre treatises which give a hard name to the natural modes of expression, and teach us that, like Hudibras, we cannot open our mouths, but out there flies a trope.

He who is impelled by necessity or inclination to attend to logic, may with propriety neglect all the rubbish of the schools, and, next to the Stagyrte himself, study only the works of Saunderson, Wallis, Watts, and Harris.

If the barren field of metaphysics is ever capable of repaying the toil of cultivation, it can only be when the attention is confined to such authors as Locke, Hucheson, and Beattie. If ethics are to be considered in the systematical method of a science, the moral philosophy of Hucheson is one of the clearest, the most elegant, and the concise treatises that have appeared upon them. The numerous writers who have fabricated fanciful and destructive systems, may be suffered to sink in the gulph of oblivion never to emerge.

In natural philosophy, the airy fabrics of hypothetical visions claim not the attention of a moment. The sun of Newton has absorbed the radiance of all other luminaries. His works and those of his followers will, of course, supersede the infinite number of folios, which, to use the expressions of Horace, may be sent to wrap up frankincense and perfumes, the only way in which they can now be useful. He to whom the works of the great philosopher are unintelligible, may acquiesce with security in the illustrations of Pemberton and Rowning. The lover of natural history, zoology, and botany, will not be at a loss in the selection of books, while fame resounds the names of Buffon, of Pennant, of Linnæus. The Romances of Pliny and his imitators will have no charms with the lover of truth.

To the classical scholar the proper books are pointed out by the superintendants of his education; and when once he has tasted them, his own cultivated

tivated feelings will direct him in the choice of modern productions. Every one knows who were the best authors in the Augustan age; and the chief caution necessary is, that the text of a Virgil, a Horace, an Ovid, may not be lost in the attention given to the tedious comments of a few Dutchmen. I have known those who have toiled through the classics, *cum notis variorum*, much less acquainted with them than he who never read them but in Sandby's edition. In attending to Burman and Heinsius, they overlooked the text; which was lost like a jewel in a dung-hill. These laborious annotators explain what needs not explanation, and, with a little critical knavery, pass by a real difficulty without notice. I am convinced that a taste for the classics is rather impeded than promoted by the Dauphin edition, in which boys are initiated; but in which the words of the author are choaked, like wholesome plants among weeds, by the notes and interpretation. To be possessed of

comments on the classics is desirable, for difficulties will occur which at first sight perplex the most ingenious; but I should prefer, for common reading, such editions as that of Jones's Horace.

Directions for the formation of the lady's library have often been wanted by those, who, with an inclination for the elegant amusement of reading, have been unable to indulge it without danger, because they had none to guide them in their choice. In my humble opinion, the following books might have a place in it, not only without hazard of ill consequences, but with great advantage to taste, and to that personal beauty which arises from mental. All the periodical publications of repute that have been written on the model of the Spectator, Rollin's Works, Plutarch's Lives, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, and the most esteemed historians of their own country, may be strongly recommended. To these, for the sake of imbibing a classical taste, may be added the best translations of the
antients,

antients, Pope's Homer, Dryden's Virgil, and Melmoth's Pliny. If French books are required, those of Boileau, Fontenelle, Le Pluche, and some select pieces of Voltaire and Rousseau, may with propriety be admitted. Novels, it is feared, will not be dispensed with. Those then of Richardson and Fielding are allowed, yet not without reluctance. Every thing indelicate will of course be excluded; but perhaps there is not less danger in the sentimental work. It attacks the heart more successfully, because more cautiously. Religious books will find a place, but not without restriction. For there is a species of devotional composition, which, by inflaming the passions, and imagination, contributes to corruption, while it seems to promote the warmest piety. From their sensibility of heart and warmth of fancy, the softer sex is supposed to be most inclined to admit the errors of the mystics.

That virtuous taste in books, which regards little else in them but the

dates and names and colophons of their printers, is unworthy genius. If an edition is tolerably correct, if the type is sufficiently large and distinct, if the paper is white, and the size portable, it matters not whether it was printed by Elzevir, Plantin, at Oxford, at Cambridge, or in Little-Britain. The price often given for a single set, by those who have unfortunately contracted this taste, would furnish a moderate library with a useful collection. The exact knowledge of editions, on which many of the learned pride themselves, though it may honourably distinguish an inhabitant of Paternoster-row, is an accomplishment by no means fit to render the liberal scholar justly ostentatious. A passion for curious books, without a wish to read them, resembles another unreasonable propensity, which hoards up the money it desires not to use.

Still more absurd is the taste for splendid binding. Books are now so delicately covered, that the possessor
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fears to read them, lest they should contract a spot. They are become, in many houses, merely ornamental furniture; and it is matter of wonder that the bookseller is applied to for it, since it is certain, that a room might be fitted up with it as elegantly, and at a much more reasonable rate, by the cabinet-maker.

E S S A Y XXXII.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF FASHION.

THEY who are exempted by their elevated condition from the confinement of commercial and professional life, involve themselves in voluntary slavery by engaging in the service of the tyrant fashion. Actions in themselves pleasing and innocent, they are compelled to abstain from, however strong their inclination, because the caprice of some distinguished character has prohibited them by his example. Like the dullest of animals, they are driven round the same circle, from which once to deviate would subject them to an appellation of all others the most formidable. To be called profligate, extravagant, inter-

intemperate, or even wicked, might be tolerated with patience; but who could bear to live with the epithet of ungenteeled?

People of fashion, once admitted to this honourable title, form a little world of their own, and learn to look down upon all others as beings of a subordinate nature. It is then a natural question, In what does this superiority consist? It arises not from learning, for the most illiterate claim it, and are indulged in the claim; it arises not from virtue, for the most vicious are not excluded. Wealth, beauty, birth, and elegance, are not the only qualifications for it, because many enjoy it who have no just pretension to either. It seems to be a combination of numbers, who agree to imitate each other, and to maintain, by the majority of voices and the effrontery of pride, that all they do is proper, and all they say is sensible; that their dress is becoming, their manners polite, their houses tasteful, their furniture, their carriages, all that appertains to them,

them, the very quintessence of real beauty. Those who come not within the pale of their jurisdiction, they condemn with papal authority to perpetual insignificance. They stigmatise them by wholesale, as people whom nobody knows, as the scum of the earth, as born only to minister to their pride, and to supply the wants of their luxury.

Groundless as are the pretensions of this confederacy, no pains are avoided to become an adopted member. For this, the stripling squanders his patrimony, and destroys his constitution. For this, the virgin bloom of innocence and beauty is withered at the vigils of the card-table. For this, the loss of integrity, and public infamy, are willingly incurred; and it is agreed by many, that it were better to go out of the world, than to live in it and be unfashionable.

If this distinction is really valuable, and if the happiness or misery of life depends upon obtaining or losing it, then
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are the thousands who walk the private path of life*, objects of the sincerest pity. Some consolation must be devised for the greater part of the community who have never breathed the atmosphere of St. James's, nor embarrassed their fortunes, nor ruined their health, in pursuit of this glorious elevation. Perhaps on an impartial review it will appear, that these are really possessed of that happiness which vanity would arrogate to itself, and yet only seems to obtain.

The middle ranks of mankind are the most virtuous, the best accomplished, and the most capable of enjoying the pleasures and advantages which fall to the lot of human nature. It is not the least of these, that they are free from the necessity of attending to those formalities which engross the attention and waste the time of the higher classes, without any adequate return of satisfaction. Horace, who was far less illuf-

* ——— fallentis semita vitæ.

trious by his birth and station, than by his elegance of manners, was wont to congratulate himself, that he could ride on a little mule to the remotest town of Italy without ridicule or molestation; while his patrons could hardly move a step, but with the unwieldy pomp of an equipage and retinue. The single article of dress, which, when splendid, requires the labour and attention of many hours, becomes a wretched task to those who wish to employ their time with honour, with improvement, with pleasure, and the possibility of a satisfactory retrospection.

Visits of form, of which every one complains, yet to which every one in some measure submits, are absolutely necessary to keep up the union of the fashionable confederacy. The more numerous, the more honourable. To be permitted to spend five minutes, or to leave a card at the houses of half the inhabitants of the politer streets, is a felicity which compensates for all
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the trouble of attendance and tedious preparation. To behold a train of coaches, some perhaps with coronets on their sides, crowding to their door; to hear the fulminations of a skilful footman, are joys of which the inhabitant of a rural retreat has little conception, but which delightfully affect the fine feelings of those who are made of purer clay, and honoured with the name of fashionable.

From this severe persecution, the man who aspires not at such honours is happily free. He visits his friend, because he feels friendly sentiments for him, and is received with cordiality. The intervals of company he can devote to study, and to the pursuit of business and amusement; for his communications with his friends require not all the preparatory trouble of fashionable formality. In the unreserved pleasures of conversation, he looks with reciprocal pity on the club at Almack's, nor envies those who knock at an hundred doors in an evening, and who have the privilege of sitting half an hour in company

pany where profession supplies the place of sincerity.

The effects of fashion constitute very wonderful phenomena in the moral world. It can transform deformity to beauty, and beauty to deformity. When we view the dresses in a picture-gallery, we are tempted to ridicule the shocking taste of our grandfathers and grandmothers; and yet there is not the least doubt but they appeared beautiful and becoming when they were worn, and that the garb of the spectator who now censures them, would have been then equally ridiculous. During the short period of a life, the fluctuations of taste are strikingly remarkable. A small buckle or a large buckle, a short coat or a long coat, a high or low head-dress, appear in their turns, in the course of only a few years, laughably absurd. Manners, books, poetry, painting, building, gardening, undergo a similar alteration. The prevailing taste is at the time supposed to be the perfect taste; a few years pass, and it is exploded as monstrous; a new one is adopted; that is also soon despised,

and the old one, in the capricious vicissitudes of the innovating spirit, is revived once more to go through the same revolutions.

There is certainly a standard of rectitude in manners, decorum, and taste; but it is more easily discovered than preserved. The vanity of the great and opulent will ever be affecting new modes, in order to increase that notice to which it thinks itself entitled. The lower ranks will imitate them as soon as they have discovered the innovation. Whether right or wrong, beautiful or deformed, in the essential nature of things, is of little moment. The pattern is set by a superior, and authority will at any time countenance absurdity. A hat, a coat, a shoe deemed fit to be worn only by a great grandfire, is no sooner put on by a Lord than it becomes graceful in the extreme, and is generally adopted from the first Lord of the treasury to the apprentice in Houndsditch.

It must be allowed, indeed, that while fashion exerts her arbitrary power in mat-

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ters which tend not to the corruption of morals, or of taste in the fine arts, she may be suffered to rule without limitation. But the misfortune is, that she will, like other potentates, encroach on provinces where her jurisdiction is usurped. The variations she is continually introducing in dress, are of service in promoting commerce. The whims of the rich feed the poor. The variety and the restlessness caused by the changes in the modes of external embellishment, contribute to please and employ those whose wealth and personal insignificance prevent them from finding more manly objects and more rational entertainment. But when the same caprice which gives law to the wardrobe extends itself to the library; when the legislator of an assembly dictates in the schools, regulates religion, and directs education, it is time that reason should vindicate her rights against the encroachments of folly.

Yet so fascinating is the influence of general example, that they who possess reason in its most improved state, are

known to follow fashion with blind obedience. The scholar and the philosopher is hurried away with the rapidity of the torrent. To stand singular, is to present a mark for the shafts of scorn and malevolence. For the sake of ease, therefore, men are induced to join the throng, which they must resist without success, but not without receiving injury in the conflict. Compliance is wisdom where opposition is inefficacious.

With respect to the distinction claimed by people of fashion, it is certain that they who are elevated by station, fortune, and a correspondent education, are often distinguished by a peculiar elegance of manners resulting from their improvements. But this ought not to inspire pride, or teach them to separate from the rest of mankind. It should give them a spirit of benevolence, and lead them to promote the happiness of others, in return for the goodness of providence in bestow-

ing on them superior advantages, without any merit of their own. They should be convinced, that the warmest philanthropist is the truest gentleman.

E S S A Y XXXIII.

ON FEMALE LITERATURE.

SIR,

I AM the only daughter of a clergyman, who, on the death of my mother, which happened when I was about three years old, concentrated his affections in me, and thought he could not display his love more effectually than in giving me a good education. His house was situated in a solitary village, and he had but little parochial duty, so that there was scarcely any thing to take off his attention from this object. He had ever been devoted to letters, and considered learning, next to virtue, as the noblest distinction of human nature.

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As soon as I could read, I was initiated in Lilly's Grammar, and, before I was eight years old, could repeat every rule in it with the greatest accuracy. I was taught indeed all kinds of needle-work; but two hours in every day were invariably set apart for my improvement in Latin. I soon perfected myself in the elementary parts, and had read Phædrus and Cornelius Nepos with a strict attention to the grammatical construction of every word and phrase they contained. From these I was advanced to Virgil and Horace. Under the direction of so good a classic as my father, I soon acquired a taste for their beauties, and not only read them through with great delight, but committed their more beautiful passages to memory.

My father was so well pleased with my proficiency, and with the task of instructing the object of his tenderest love, that he resolved to carry my improvements higher, and to open to my view the spacious fields of Grecian literature,

literature. The Greek Grammar I mastered with great ease, and I found a sweetness in the language which amply repaid me for the little difficulties I sometimes encountered. From the Greek Testament I went on to read the Cyropædia of Xenophon, the Oration of Demosthenes, the Dialogues of Plato, and the Iliad and Odyssey of Homer. That I received great improvement from this course, cannot be denied; but the pleasure of it alone was to me a sufficient reward. I was enabled to drink at the fountain-head, while others were obliged to content themselves with the distant and polluted stream. I found that no translations whatever, however accurately they might exhibit the sense of originals, could express the beauties of the language. I was possessed of a power of inspecting those volumes, in admiration of which the world has long agreed, but from which my sex has for the most part been unreasonably excluded. It was a noble privilege, and I valued

myself upon it; but I hope and believe I did not despise those who had not partaken of it solely for want of opportunities.

The French and Italian languages became easy after my acquaintance with the Latin, and my father was of opinion that they are indispensably necessary to the modern scholar. In French I read Rollin, Boileau, Fontenelle, Voiture, Bouhours, Bruyere, Rousseau, Voltaire, and Marmontel; in Italian, Petrarch, Tasso, Ariosto, Guicciardin, and the Cortegiano of Castiglio. All these gave me a degree of pleasure, which I am sure none would be without, who are capable of obtaining it.

After having laid a foundation in the languages, which I believe is seldom done with success but at an early age, my father allowed me to feast without controul on the productions of my own country. The learning I had acquired enabled me to read them critically, and to understand all their allusions. The best writers abound so much in quotations,

tions, that I cannot help thinking that they who are unacquainted with the antient languages, must often be chagrined at their inability to unlock the concealed treasure.

All the classical poets from Shakspeare to Pope were my study and delight. History, which my father always recommended as peculiarly suited to adorn the female mind, was a favourite pursuit. I digested Hume and Robertson, and took a pleasure in every biographical anecdote I could collect. After reading a life, or the history of any particular event, I was always desirous to give my sentiments upon it in writing; an exercise which I found to be attended with great advantage.

I never penetrated deeply into the sciences, yet I could not rest satisfied without a superficial knowledge of astronomy, of the solar system, of experimental philosophy, and of geography mathematical, physical, and political. This little was necessary for rational conversation, and I had neither time
nor

nor taste for scientific refinements. Poetry was my delight, and I sometimes wrote it, as the partiality of my poor father led him to assert, in a pleasing manner.

I do not make it a merit of my own, because it was entirely owing to my father's direction, that with all my attention to books, I did not neglect the ornamental accomplishments. My father excelled in music, and he taught me to play on the harpsichord. He engaged a good master to instruct me in dancing; and he always cautioned me against that neglect of dress and extreme cleanliness, which, he said, had sometimes involved literary ladies in deserved disgrace. He likewise inculcated the necessity of avoiding a pedantic manner of conversation, and strictly charged me never to be overbearing, or to shew in the company of others the least appearance of conscious superiority. I believe I may venture to say, that I complied with his directions, and that I talked with perfect

fect ease among the superficial, and neither expressed nor felt contempt, except where vanity and affectation were combined with ignorance.

Yet notwithstanding my improvements and my earnest endeavours to prevent them from becoming invidious, I find myself received in the world with less cordiality than I had reason to expect. My own sex stand too much in awe of me to bear me any affection. When I come into their company, an universal silence would prevail, if it were not interrupted by myself. Though I cannot say that I am treated rudely, yet I can easily perceive that the civilities I receive are constrained; and I have every reason to believe, that no small pains are taken to traduce my character, and to ridicule my taste in dress, and all the circumstances of external behaviour. It is kindly hinted, that a little awkwardness and impropriety may be excused in a learned lady, and that dress and decorum are beneath the notice of a poetess.

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I have no reason to think that my person is particularly disagreeable, yet, I know not how it is, I am avoided by gentlemen who are ambitious of the company of other ladies. They have dropt, in the hearing of some of my friends, that though they think me extremely clever, yet they cannot reconcile the ideas of female attractions and the knowledge of the Greek. They do not mean to detract from my praise, but they must own, that I am not the woman after their hearts. They entertain a notion, that a lady of improved understanding will not submit to the less dignified cares of managing a household. She knows how to make verses, says the witling, but give me the woman who can make a pudding.

I must confess, I ever thought it the most valuable recommendation of a wife to be capable of becoming a conversible companion to her husband; nor did I ever conceive that the qualifications of a cook-maid, a laundress, or a house-keeper, were the most desirable accomplishments

plishments in a partner for life. A woman of improved understanding and real sense is more likely to submit to her condition, whatever it may be, than the uneducated or the half-learned; and such an one will always be willing to superintend œconomy when it becomes her duty; and to take an active part in household management, when the happiness of him she loves, and of herself, depends upon her personal interference.

The education of children in the earlier periods, particularly of daughters, naturally belongs to the mother. Her inclination to improve them, seconded by her ability to take the proper methods, must be attended with the most valuable effects. The world is acquainted with the happy consequences of a Cornelia's parental care. But it seems probable, that little nourishment of mind can be imbibed from a mother whose ideas hardly ever wandered beyond the limits either of a kitchen or of a dressing-room. Neither is there sufficient reason to conclude, that she

whose intellectual acquisitions enable her to entertain her husband, and to form the minds of her children, must be incapable or unwilling to superintend the table, and give a personal attention to domestic œconomy.

That learning belongs not to the female character, and that the female mind is not capable of a degree of improvement equal to that of the other sex, are narrow and unphilosophical prejudices. The present times exhibit most honourable instances of female learning and genius in a Montagu, a Chapone, and a Carter. The superior advantages of boys education is, perhaps, the sole reason of their subsequent superiority. Learning is equally attainable, and, I think, equally valuable, to the woman as the man. For my own part, I would not lose the little I possess, to avoid all those disagreeable consequences of which I have just now complained.

E S S A Y XXXIV.

ON PARENTAL INDULGENCE.

Utinam liberorum mores non ipsi perderemus. Infantiam statim deliciis solvimus. Mollis illa educatio, quam indulgentiam vocamus, nervos omnes et mentis et corporis frangit. . . . Discunt hæc miseri antequam sciant vitia esse: inde soluti ac fluentes, non accipiunt e scholis mala illa, sed in scholas afferunt.

QUINTILIAN.

THE love of progeny* seems to operate as strongly in the brute creation as in the human species, during the helpless age of immaturity. The guidance of instinct, indeed, as it is more decisively determinate, seems to bring up an offspring with less de-

* *Στοργή*.

viation

violation from the purposes of nature, than the superior faculty of reason. The greater acuteness of reason leads to hesitation, and involves in error, while it is distracted by the variety of objects it assembles for its choice. The bird never injures its young by repletion. The young, indeed, of few animals, when left to the care of the parent, without the interference of man, is found to perish. But it is well known how large a proportion of children die under the age of two years, in our metropolis. The cause is in general the neglect of nature for the aids of art, proceeding from a degree of fondness which stimulates the parent to take all the care upon herself, and to leave little to the invisible process of natural energies.

If the child survive by the vigour of its constitution to a puerile age, even then the fondness of the parent, most amiable in its origin, but most injurious to the object it most wishes to benefit, is found to destroy the very purposes
of

of living, by endeavouring to render life pleasurable to excess, and without vicissitude. If his absence can be so far borne as to permit him to enter at a school, an earnest desire is expressed that he may be indulged in all those luxuries of the table which pollute the pure stream of the infant blood, and, by overloading the organs of intellect, preclude the possibility of solid improvement. He whose attention should be engrossed by his book, and who should learn at first to look on every pleasure of the senses as a subordinate pleasure, is taught by the overweening attachment of a parent, to have little other care than for the pampering of the grossest among the animal appetites. It is seldom the first question, whether the superintendant of a seminary is ingenious or careful; but whether his table is supplied with dainties, and set out with the artificial additions of pride and gluttony?

Regularity of diet, and modest decency in all the circumstances of scholastic

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life,

life, are often represented as the result of sparing œconomy; and the young pupil no sooner returns, in the days of vacation, to his paternal roof, than he is crammed with delicacies to compensate for the penance he has undergone at the place of his education. He is even rewarded and caressed for the calumnies he invents against the prudence and œconomy of his absent instructor.

We can derive but little improvement from the teacher we condemn. Yet how can the boy avoid contempt for the instructor, whom he is taught to consider as totally regardless of any thing but his own sordid interest, and capable of depriving the child committed to his care of his proper sustenance? But they who are sensible in other respects, are rendered, by their fondness, weak enough to believe any calumny which a wayward child utters for the sake of changing his place of education, or of remaining at home.

The propensity to indulgence is so strong, that at the maturest age, and with

with the most improved reason, it is difficult to restrain it within the limits of moderation. To encourage instead of checking this natural tendency, is, in effect, to nurse those vices of the future youth, and to cause those excesses of early manhood, which in the end hasten the grey hairs of the inconsiderate parent with sorrow to the grave. Few would be profligate in the extreme, if they were not untaught all the virtue they learn under their tutors, by the example and inadvertence of their own family. When immorality is obliquely recommended by a father's practice, the infection is irresistible. A tutor's admonitions are soon supposed to proceed merely from official care, when they contradict the conduct of him whom a child naturally venerates above all others.

The general custom of allowing a considerable weekly stipend, and of giving pecuniary presents to the schoolboy, often frustrates the intentions of education. It is not likely that he should

give his attention to literary improvement, who is obliged to study how he shall spend the bounty of his aunts and cousins; and whose pocket always enables him to find recreation without seeking it in books. It would be happy if things could be so contrived, that, for want of employment, he should be driven to those volumes where employment of the sweetest kind may be always found, attended with the most valuable advantages. A profusion of money at a childish age is also not uncommonly the cause of subsequent extravagance, and tends to introduce one of the most pernicious and least curable vices, a propensity to gaming. But reasoning can avail little against the partiality of a grandmother, who cannot suffer present pleasure to be neglected by her favourite for the sake of an advantage distant and uncertain.

It is usually supposed that maternal affection is stronger than paternal. There is no doubt but that it often interposes in adjusting the plan of education.

Its kind solicitude is too amiable to be censured with asperity. Yet we must assert, that it is not possible that a mother, though sensible and accomplished, should be so well qualified to direct the care of a boy's education in all its parts, as a father of equal abilities. All the important departments in civil life are filled by men. The pulpit, the bar, the senate-house, are appropriated to men. Men, from the facility with which they travel, and their superior hardiness, see more of the world than women; who, with the same opportunities, might indeed make the same observations; but who, in the present state of things, cannot judge of those qualifications, attainments, manners, and characters, which recommend to notice in all the professions of life, and tend to secure success. Hence it is that they are observed to set a high value on ornamental accomplishments, of the grace of which their fine taste is peculiarly sensible; and to undervalue the more solid attainments, with the utility and

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beauty of which their situation keeps them unacquainted. Many a fond and sensible mother has controverted the necessity of learning Latin, as a dead language, in which there can be no use while the living languages of France and Italy are more easily attainable, and infinitely more fashionable. Such a judgment is not to be wondered at; nor does it proceed from natural weakness, but from an unavoidable unacquaintance with the charms of the classics, and the utility of Latin in the practice of every liberal art, in the conversation of the enlightened, and in the study of the most admired modern books, which abound in Latin quotations, in allusions to the classics, and in words which cannot be fully understood without understanding the language from which they are derived.

Add to this, that the extreme tenderness of maternal affection will not permit that strict discipline to be exercised on a beloved son, which, though it has nothing in it of harsh severity, resembles

resembles not the soft and indulgent treatment of the domestic nursery. Scarcely any thing of value is brought to perfection without some care analogous to this of scholastic discipline. The tree will not produce its fruits in sufficient abundance, or with a proper flavour, unless it is chastised in its luxuriations by the hand of art. It is requisite that the stubborn soil should be broken by cultivation. The most serviceable animals are either useless or hurtful, till reduced to obedience by coercion. Man, above all, possessed as he is of stronger powers and acuter perceptions, of ill qualities no less than good, in a superior degree, requires all the aids of art to correct his enormities, and teach him to act a rational and consistent part in the theatre of the world. Although the infliction of salutary discipline may give pain, even to those who know it to be salutary, yet they must not, for the sake of sparing their own feelings, act in contradiction to their judgment, and do an irreparable injury

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injury to those whom they most tenderly love. Excessive lenity and indulgence is ultimately excessive rigour.

With the excellent effects of Spartan discipline, every one is acquainted. Of the lamentable consequences of modern relaxation, daily experience furnishes examples. The puerile age is patient and tractable. Reformation must begin there. Temperance, diligence, modesty, and humility, cannot be too early inculcated. These will lead through the temple of virtue to the temple of honour. In this progress, strict discipline will sometimes be necessary; but let not the pretence of proper correction give an opportunity for the gratification of vindictive cruelty. Inhumanity even in a Busby cannot admit of palliation.

ESSAY XXXV.

ON THE ILL EFFECTS OF PROVING BY
ARGUMENT TRUTHS ALREADY
ADMITTED.

Perspicuitas enim argumentatione elevatur.

Cic.

SIR,

I HAVE reason to think that I inherited from nature a plain understanding, without any pretensions to the vivacity of genius. I am grateful to my parents that it was cultivated in that common way which guides through the beaten path of life, and leads not to those eccentricities, which, for the most part, terminate in misery.

I was

I was destined to a mercantile life, and my education was therefore confined to writing, arithmetic, and a little elementary Latin acquired at the Grammar-school. With my steadiness of conduct, there was little difficulty in acquiring a competency in the trade in which I was settled by my father. As I had no family, and was free from avarice and ambition, I retired early from the smoke and hurry of the town to a sweet little house and garden on the borders of Epping-forest.

A state of total inaction both of body and mind, I found less tolerable than the constant bustle of a town life. To my garden I had recourse for exercise. For rural sports I was unqualified, as I had never fired a gun or mounted a horse. My garden, however, amused me sufficiently, contributed to confirm my health, and, at the same time, induced a contemplative turn. This led me to seek, in books, a supply for the loss of that succession of objects which had so long solicited and engrossed my

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attention

attention in the great streets of the capital.

The course of reading into which I fell, might have proved hurtful, had I not been discreet enough to correct its tendency in time. At best, it only served to fill up those hours, which might, indeed, have been more agreeably and more usefully employed.

I had received all the notions usually instilled by parental authority, with implicit belief. I was told that there was one God, and I believed it, for I saw his works around me. I embraced revealed religion in all its parts, with the same evidence of conviction with which I believed the sun to exist in the heavens, when I beheld its radiance, and felt its warmth. I saw and believed the difference between right and wrong, vice and virtue, justice and injustice, as strongly as the difference between black and white, and sweet and bitter. I never dreamt of calling in question the authenticity of the scriptural writers, the doctrine of the trinity, the divinity of
our

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our Saviour, the immateriality and immortality of the human soul, and the resurrection of the body. When I repeated the creed, I spoke with the same confidence of undoubting conviction, as when I asserted the truth of a fact of which I had ocular demonstration. The steady light of common sense had guided me, and I had been humble enough to follow its directions.

It was now at last that I perceived the first shadow of a doubt on these subjects, and it was caused by the following circumstances. In collecting my little library, I often met with books entitled Proofs and Demonstrations of those important points on which I entertained not a single idea of uncertainty; but I was now naturally led to conclude, that those things were not indisputably evident, of which so many laboured proofs were continually offered to the public notice. My curiosity was raised, and I began to suspect, that it was owing to my simplicity alone that I had hitherto received, without proof,
all

all those doctrines of which the world seemed to require the most powerful defence, and confirmations infinitely repeated.

The bare appearance of an attempt to prove opinions which I had ever considered as wanting no other proof than the first strong decisions of common sense, shook the stability of my conviction. Hitherto my days had been tranquil and secure. All my principles in morality and religion had been planted in infancy, and had taken root deep and strong. My understanding had not been actively ingenious enough to overturn those systems of my forefathers which had led them through the ways of piety to peace. But I now found my happiness begin to totter, as my principles began to be undermined.

In the books which were every day offered for the conversion of sceptics, for refuting atheists, for proving christianity, for demonstrating that there is a difference between good and evil, for asserting
that

that there is some essential superiority in the human nature over the animal; I found no remedy in my unsettled state, but, on the contrary, an increasing tendency to universal scepticism. The ingenious authors of such treatises find it necessary to raise objections in order to remove them, to give a degree of weight and solidity to the arguments of their adversaries, that the weight and solidity of their own victorious arguments may be rendered more conspicuous and more honourable.

The books of the objectors I should never have read; nor should I have known any thing of their objections; had I not been ensnared into an acquaintance with the enemies of truth by the ill-judged conduct of her friends. Heresies and errors long forgotten and exploded were revived by these, merely to display their ingenuity in refutation. Sometimes, through the weakness of their judgment, they gave advantage to sophistry, and by throwing with a feeble hand

hand a pointless dart*, encouraged a defeated foe to resume new courage.

Even in the most judicious apologies for those doctrines which I thought wanted no apology, though the arguments were conclusive, I did not perceive that my conviction was strengthened, but, on the contrary, that it was in some degree less clear than before I had received argumentative demonstration. My idea of the truth was at first simple, and proportionably evident; but when that idea was connected with a long chain of arguments, my understanding could not so readily comprehend it with all its additional appendages. There is a degree of abstraction in closely reasoned writings, which is necessarily attended with a little obscurity. And hence it happens that illustrations, as they are called, of important truths, are sometimes the only circumstances which involve them in darkness.

* ——— telum imbelli sine ictu.

VIRG.

Whatever

Whatever complaints have been made against the prevalence of infidelity in this age, and however true they may be of the higher or dissipated orders, it is yet certain, that the christian religion is implicitly received by the greater part of the community. Though their practice, from the infirmity of human nature, is seldom correspondent with their principles, yet they are far from the character of speculative infidels. It is at least highly probable, that all who frequent the established churches are christians. It has therefore been matter of just surprise, that a great number of the most ingenious divines should enter the pulpit, as if they were to convert a congregation of heathens or deists. To prove, by a great variety of laboured arguments, the existence of God, is surely unnecessary before an audience, whose convention in a church is a proof that they already believe it. It can have little other effect than to lull them asleep, or to suggest scruples instead of removing them. For it is
certain,

certain, that not half those arguments in support of scepticism have usually fallen within the notice of the common hearer, which are for the most part adduced, in order to be refuted, by a subtle disputant in divinity. A few good treatises might properly enough be written by the truly able, to shew the sophistry of a deistical author, and then he and his lucubrations might be suffered to pass on to oblivion; whither they would glide with a rapid course, if they were not impeded by the imprudent interference of those, who in reality must wish to accelerate their extinction.

Neither polemical, controversial, doctrinal, nor systematical religion seems well calculated to answer any of the ends of true religion. The ends of true religion are all friendly and benign. But peace, benevolence, and purity of heart, are, I believe, not at all promoted in those many volumes of theology which have owed their origin to controversy, and to logical and metaphysical refinement.

One might almost venture to pronounce it a judgment on the temerity and the presumption of man, that scarcely any philosopher has distinguished himself by those speculations which were never designed to fall within the sphere of the human intellect, without starting some notion absurd enough to render his memory ridiculous. Berkely, one of the authors on whom I was so unfortunate as to fall, and whose sense and virtue I venerate, made me laugh when he had demonstrated to me the non-existence of matter. I happened to meet with him soon after I had been reading an author who had proved, so far at least as that my poor understanding could not refute him, that the human soul was material, and perished at death. Between them both I found I was, on a sudden, deprived of both my soul and body, without any sensible loss or detriment in either.

Convinced at last that common sense, or that share and species of understanding which nature has bestowed on the

TRUTHS ALREADY ADMITTED. 355

the greater part of men, is the safest guide to certainty and happiness; I have laid aside proofs, demonstrations, and illustrations of all matters sufficiently proved, demonstrated, and illustrated to the humble mind; by their own internal evidence. And however the learned and the disputatious may amuse themselves in morals and religion with fine-spun subtilties, I shall rest satisfied with the coarser notions of my forefathers, and make the scriptural rule the rule of my thoughts and actions—To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with my God.

And thus I have endeavored to lay the foundation of a new system of divinity, which I have called the *Christian's Guide*. I have endeavored to lay the foundation of a new system of divinity, which I have called the *Christian's Guide*.

And thus I have endeavored to lay the foundation of a new system of divinity, which I have called the *Christian's Guide*. I have endeavored to lay the foundation of a new system of divinity, which I have called the *Christian's Guide*.

E S S A Y XXXVI.

ON AFFECTATION OF FEMALE LEARNING,

THE most attractive beauty of the person results from the graces of the mind. Delicacy, sweetness, sense, and sensibility, shining in the eyes, will compensate for irregularity of features, and will sooner excite love in a feeling heart, than the best formed face and the finest complexional hue without expression.

Nature must indeed have laid the foundation of these amiable qualities in the disposition; but they are by no methods so effectually called forth and improved, as by the cultivation of a literary taste. In an intercourse with the world, we see and feel the disagreeable passions; such
as

as have an effect in distorting the countenance, and in giving to the eyes an envious, a proud, a disdainful, or an artful aspect; than which nothing is more repugnant to the idea of allure-ment. Eyes that unfortunately have acquired any of these appearances, whatever beauties they may be surrounded with, possess a repellent power, and operate like the basilisk. But however wicked the world is, books are for the most part still virtuous. Human nature appears in them, in its most pleasing colours. They inspire generous and tender sentiments. She who is judiciously conversant with them, will find her person improving as her mind is informed, and as her heart is enlarged, elevated, and purified. This must be a powerful motive for application among the ladies; and they may rest assured, that personal and mental beauty, though when separate their dominion is not absolute, are truly irresistible when combined.

An application to books, however, is often found not to produce any attrac-

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give effects; nor is it to be wondered at, when it is conducted in an injudicious and desultory manner. The advice of friends is at first necessary to point out the kind of books, and the times, the modes, and the degrees of study. Superficial and ill-directed reading tends to inspire the most odious of all vanity, and to occasion a behaviour truly ridiculous.

Sempronia has studied all the Magazines for these ten years past, and has now and then obtained the honour of contributing a little piece to some of her admired miscellanies. This distinction, as she thinks it, has greatly elevated her in her own opinion. She deems it sufficient to emancipate her from the usual decorums of external forms. She talks with an overbearing confidence, which, if she were not excused because she is a professed wit, would be intolerable rudeness. Her attention to the muses has excluded the graces from any share of her notice. If you call upon her in the morning, you

you find her with slipshod shoes, with no apron, with matted hair, a dirty face, a cap awry, and fingers begrimed with ink. If you ask her in what she is exercising her genius, she informs you she is writing a Pindaric ode on spring, and is looking in Byshe's *Art of Poetry* for a rhyme to trees. It must be sent immediately, she says, or it will not be inserted this month. She hopes, therefore, that she may be excused in declining company. Her visitor has reason to rejoice at the dismissal; for the sight of her, as Swift less delicately says of *Caelia*, will operate as an emetic, and this smell as a poison.

Corinna happened to fall upon some of the works of our modern sceptics. She could not understand them perfectly; but she discovered enough to be assured that scepticism was supposed to be a mark of superior sense, of a freedom from those narrow prejudices which enshroud the vulgar mind. She cannot therefore talk on common affairs; but when she gets into company with en-

lightened people, she expatiates on the happiness of possessing a philosophical turn, and pities the poor narrow souls who go to church and perform all their duties, as they call them, with mechanical regularity, just like their great grandmothers. Voltaire, Rousseau, Bolingbroke, and Hume, are her oracles. She is dreaded by her own sex, and indeed voluntarily gives up their society. But the men she thinks more entertaining, more conversible, and less shackled with prejudices. She imagines herself particularly attended to by them; and indeed there are some humourists who listen to her conversation, in order to lay up store for ridicule. All who are judges, condemn and dislike her for entering into studies which have a natural tendency to darken the understanding, and to corrupt the heart, and which are peculiarly odious in those who were formed to increase the comforts of life, and not to cut them off by diffusing the gloomy notions of the sceptic.

It

It was the misfortune of Fulvia to live next door to a circulating library. In every moment of listlessness, the maid was dispatched for a handful of novels; no matter by whom they were written, or what they were in themselves, provided they were sentimental. By an uninterrupted course of such reading, she had acquired a taste for anecdotes, private history, and all that relates to the effects of love, which, she was led to think, formed the great business of human life. Her heart had been melted, and pierced, and smitten, and wounded, so often, that it was at last so mollified, that she felt the tenderest sentiments for every man with little distinction. She could not pass a few moments in a private interview with a male acquaintance, without being conscious of tender sentiments for him. She often doubted whether she ought, upon the whole, to rejoice or lament that she was endowed with such extreme sensibility. But to be sure, so it was, her poor heart was so full of love, that
every

ON AFFECTIONATION OF

every one who approached might have a share unasked! Her voice was faint and tremulous; her refinements were elegant to a degree inconceivable. She was hardly fit for this low orb. She was always miserable, except when pouring out her sentiments in letters to some beloved Eudoxus. She was, in short, too tender, too susceptible, too pure, too elevated, to live in this world; and for every body said, till, in evil hour, she ran away with a corporal quartered in the colony and has never been heard of since. At 16 Lesbia, when very young, wrote a few rhymes, which, as her age was considered, were much applauded by her friends. Flushed with praise, she considered herself as a second Sappho, and has ever since been devoted to the muse. Her reading was chiefly confined to the poet's corner in news-papers, and her productions have rivalled her models. She composes enigmas, acrostics, rebusses, and songs, for those little red pocket-books which are annually published for the ladies, and she has had the

the honour of gaining the reward for expounding the Prize Riddle. Within the circle of her acquaintance, she is much admired. If a wedding happens among any of them, she pays for her bride-cake with an epithalamium; and she keeps in her drawers, like haberdashers wares in a shop, odes, elegies, and epigrams, adapted to every occasion. She had once an offer of being married. Her lover asked her consent, and was told, he should wait upon her on such a day. In the mean time she prepared a soliloquy in blank verse, expressive of reciprocal affection. The lover waited upon her at the time appointed, but hearing the blank verse spouted with all the vehemence of a player in the fifth act, he concluded his mistress was a mad woman, and dropt his visits.

Of all subjects, politics seem the least adapted to the female character. Women are entirely excluded from legislative influence, and, it is well known, that public affairs are seldom treated with temper, either in writing or conversation.

sation. But the female politician is by no means uncommon. Cornelia derives all her learning, of which she thinks she possesses an ample share, from the miscellaneous volumes of a Say and a Woodfall. She has herself sometimes ventured to communicate a paragraph or two, and has been delighted even to rapture, with the thought, that a plan or conjecture of hers has been wafted throughout the empire by so rapid a conveyance. On common subjects she is mild and reasonable; but while the gentlemen are talking politics, she submits with great reluctance to the rule of decorum, which requires that she should pay attention to the ladies. Her colour comes and goes for a long time, till at last she can bear it no longer, and bursts out with a blaze of eloquence scarcely rivalled in the most famous schools of oratory, those of Athens or of Billingsgate. A treaty on marriage was on foot some time ago; but after the preliminaries were all settled, and a day for the ratification of the articles fixed,

fixed, a rupture ensued on the adjustment of the balance of power, and hostilities have not yet ceased, nor is a coalition of the parties likely to take place.

In these few instances, and in those many which observation of the world will supply, there seems to have been an original fund of parts, and a love of books, which, properly directed, would have led to great improvements. But vague industry and unguided emulation, stimulated to persist in a wrong path by the partial praises of friends and relations, has precipitated even the amiably disposed into unsupported vanity, and caused them to distinguish themselves without acquiring honour.

To be affected in any way, is at all times, in all places, and in all degrees, to be disagreeable. But affectation of learning, in a woman with very little merit, draws upon itself the contempt and hatred of both sexes. They who excel most in either sex, are found by
experience

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experience to be most candid and modest; to assume least, and to join in conversation with others, without displaying the sense of superiority. Indeed it often happens, that there is an amiable humility in true genius and learning, which compels the possessor of them to think diffidently of his own character, amid the united praises of all around. Let her who possesses the bright jewel of learning, take care to set it in a plain manner, and its lustre will become more conspicuous.

In the embellishment of the person, a sufficient degree of care is usually taken that nothing unbecoming shall have a place in it. A regard is paid to age, rank, and every circumstance which can point out the line of propriety. But in adorning the mind, it is usual to attend to little else but the dictates of inclination. Yet there is certainly a kind of sexual difference in the minds of the sexes, which admits and requires a different species of intellectual accomplishment.

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plishment. Economy is said, indeed, to be the peculiar province of women; yet surely, as rational beings, their reason may properly receive the highest possible cultivation. Nor should their attainments expose them to contempt or neglect, unless they are sullied by obtruding arrogance.

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E S S A Y XXXVII.

ON SPECULATIVE CRITICISM AND ON
GENIUS.

Ces fortes de speculations ne donnent point de genie à ceux qui en manquent; elles n'aident beaucoup ceux qui en ont: et le plus souvent même les gens de genie sont incapables d'être aidées par les speculations. A quoi donc sont elles bonnes? A faire remonter jusqu'aux premieres idées du beau quelque gens qui aiment la raisonnement, et se plaisent à reduire sous l'empire de la philosophie les choses qui en paroissent le plus indépendantes, et que l'on croit communement abandonnées à la bizarrerie des goûts.

FONTENELLE.

— Mens divinior. —

HOR.

ARISTOTLE was the first of those writers who have endeavoured to subject taste to philosophy. His poeticks are almost the only parts of his works which continue to be esteemed with

with a degree of implicit veneration. Mutilated and imperfect as they have come down to us, they yet contain many sentences pregnant with matter, and which lead the mind into the most curious theory. Yet it is certain that they never yet formed a single poet, nor assisted him in any other respect than in the mechanical contrivance of a plan; a defect in which is easily forgiven, when it is supplied by the native charms of genius. Of this our Shakespeare is a proof, who, with all his ignorance of speculative criticism, wrote in such a manner, as not only to be preferred by those who idolise him through prejudice, but by the most impartial readers, to Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*.

Though metaphysics were scarcely ever more exploded than in the present times, yet there is a taste for philosophical criticism particularly preva-

* See an Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare, by the truly ingenious Mrs. Montagu.

lent among our thoughtful neighbours in North Britain. Lord Kaims has penetrated deeply to discern the cause of those emotions, which literary compositions are found to produce. He has displayed great taste, great elegance, great reading, and a subtilty of enquiry, which must have resulted from unwearyed labour, and from a singular share of natural sagacity. But I believe no reader ever found himself better able to compose, after having perused these volumes, than before he saw them. Nor is it said, that their author, with all his theoretical knowledge of poetry, is himself a poet. This is not advanced to detract from his merit; for it is true of Aristotle, and of all those writers who, with a genius for logic and metaphysics, have entered on the provinces of taste and criticism. Dr. Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* is a book of uncommon merit; it is read with great pleasure and improvement; yet it will be readily owned, that it tends little to form the orator. The author of the
Origin

Origin and Progress of Language has displayed, as Harris says, many judicious and curious remarks on style, composition, language, particularly the English; observations of the last consequence to those who wish either to write or to judge with accuracy and elegance. This is certainly true; and yet many have written, and many will write, with accuracy and elegance, without even hearing of this excellent treatise.

Most of the books which the world has agreed to admire, were composed previously to the appearance of systematical and abstruse theories of criticism, or by authors who, it is well known, paid them no attention. Homer, who is still the best heathen author in the world, had neither archetype nor instructor. Had his mind been called off from the book of nature, to such speculations as the Stagyrice afterwards fabricated from his noble inventions, there is great reason to believe that the *Iliad* and *Odysssey* had long ago gone

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whither the coldly correct productions are daily hastening. Theocritus would have written with much less ease and simplicity, had he read all that critical ingenuity has advanced on pastoral poetry. The Orations of Demosthenes, however elaborate, were not formed on the models of professed rhetoricians. No Boffu had written when Virgil produced his magnificent work. No treatises on the sublime and beautiful had appeared, when Milton poured his majestic song. Nature, glowing nature, suggested the exquisitely fine ideas as they flowed, and left laborious criticism to weary herself in forming rules and systems from the unstudied efforts of her happier temerity.

It must not, however, be immediately concluded, that these books, which display great ingenuity, are useless, and the result of ill-employed time and talents. They constitute a most elegant species of philosophy. They lead to a knowledge of the human heart, and the operation of the passions. They
require

require genius of a peculiar kind, the subtle and penetrating, and they please readers who are possessed of a corresponding taste. The point which we mean to evince is, that the lover of poetry, of oratory, of all the objects of classical taste, who means to exercise himself in the composition of them, will find himself mistaken in his plan of study, if he reads such writers as a preparatory discipline. Original authors must at first engross his attention; and from these, if he is possessed of abilities, he will insensibly catch a portion of fire, with which he will invigorate his own compositions; and in consequence of which, he will be read with pleasure, though he should not have studied one critical analyser from Aristotle to the latest modern.

To learn in what this noble distinction of genius consists, has been the subject of enquiry. Little success has hitherto attended it; for the mind, as it has been often said, like the eye, though it calls up all nature to its view, can-

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not procure a sight of itself. With great probability, it has been supposed that genius is an extraordinary power of attention; a capacity in the mind of attaching itself closely and strongly, at a glance, to every object that solicits its regard; of taking in the whole of it in all its distant relations, dependencies, modifications, origin, and consequences. But after allowing attention to be genius, the question recurs, by what means this attention is caused and secured. Thus far the name is only changed, and the subject is still involved in difficulty.

It is too obviously true to be controverted, that there is an essential difference in the organization of different men; not merely in the external form, but in the interior structure of the invisible springs which regulate all the animal tendencies and motions. It is highly probable, that a delicate system of nerves, or a firmer contexture of them, is better able to observe the external world with unerring accuracy, than

than a more callous or a more relaxed assemblage of these instruments of sensation. This favourable predisposition of the organs, followed by peculiar opportunities for collecting ideas, and by inducements to impart them to the world, may perhaps constitute what we call genius.

There is indeed little doubt, but that some kind of genius, or, in other words, some peculiar ability to receive a certain train of ideas necessary to the practice of some art, or to the pursuit of some profession, is possessed by every individual not in a state of idiotism. Nature, a kind parent to all her children, has usually endowed them all with a power of exerting themselves with skill and advantage in some way or other. The misfortune has been, that the indications of nature are not always sufficiently manifest to the conductors of education. The destination is often necessarily fixed before the faculties are arrived at sufficient strength to point out their propensity.

Universal genius is indeed sparingly, perhaps never bestowed. For the preservation of impartiality, where an excellence is allowed in any remarkable degree, there is often a defect to counterbalance it. Yet in the literary annals of almost every nation, we find many distinguished by intellectual endowments above the ordinary condition of humanity. It is a noble privilege to excel men in the very perfection by which they excel the irrational animals, and is doubtless permitted by providence for the happiness of mankind. Let it be considered as an instance, what a train of light has been diffused far and wide on thousands and tens of thousands, for the space of near two thousand years, from the illumined understanding of the individual Cicero. Or, to take an example from our own polished age and country, let a conjecture be formed of the number of those who have been led to every thing good and great* by an Addison.

* *εἰς καλοκαγαθίας.*

The world, however, has seldom been grateful to its benefactors. It has banished, poisoned, and crucified them. But there was an inward satisfaction in conscious rectitude, a generous spirit in heroic virtue, which bore them through every thing with comfort, and their merit increased and triumphed in adversity.

They who have been possessed of subordinate degrees of genius, have in later times been induced to affect a singularity of sentiment and practice, in order to draw upon themselves the eyes of mankind. In pursuit of this end, they have adopted vices which their hearts and understanding must have condemned. Eccentricity has been the object of their wishes. Ruin and disgrace have been the usual consequences, and the admiration of others has at last been extinguished in compassion. Poor man! it has been often exclaimed, he was indeed clever, but he wanted conduct, and he died in goal.

If

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If moral could be combined with mental excellence; if the native vigour of genius could submit to be guided and restrained by the decisions of well conducted art; then might be supplied, what none will venture to expect, the two grand desiderata in morals and literature, a perfect man and a perfect work.

E S S A Y XXXVIII.

ON THE SUPERIOR VALUE OF SOLID
ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN CICERO AND LORD
CHESTERFIELD.

Effe quam videri.

SALL.

CICERO.

MISTAKE me not. I know how to value the sweet courtesies of life. Affability, attentions, decorum of behaviour, if they have not been ranked by philosophers among the virtues, are certainly related to them, and have a powerful influence in promoting social happiness. I have recommended them, as well as yourself. But I contend, and no sophistry shall prevail upon me to give up this point, that, to be truly amiable,

amiable, they must proceed from goodness of heart. Assumed by the artful to serve the purposes of private interest, they degenerate to contemptible grimace, and detestable hypocrisy.

CHESTERFIELD.

Excuse me, my dear Cicero; I cannot enter farther into the controversy at present. I have a hundred engagements at least, and see yonder my little elegant French Comtesse. I promised her and myself the pleasure of a promenade. Pleasant walking enough in these elysian groves. So much good company too, that if it were not that the canaille are apt to be troublesome, I should not much regret the distance from the Thuilleries. But adieu, mon cher ami, for I see Madame * * * is joining the party. Adieu, adieu!

CICERO.

Contemptible wretch!

CHESTERFIELD.

Ah! what do I hear? Recollect that I am a man of honour, unused to the
pity

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pity or the insults of an upstart, a *novus homo*. But perhaps your exclamation was not meant of me—If so, why——

CICERO.

I am as little inclined to insult as to flatter you. Your levity excited my indignation; but my compassion for the degeneracy of human nature, exhibited in your instance, absorbs my contempt.

CHESTERFIELD.

I could be a little angry, but, as bienséance forbids it, I will be a philosopher for once.—A propos, pray do you reconcile your, what shall I call it? your unsmooth address to those rules of decorum, that gentleness of manners, of which you say you know and teach the propriety as well as myself?

CICERO.

To confess the truth, I would not advance the arts of embellishment to extreme refinement. Ornamental education, or an attention to the graces, has a connection with effeminacy. In acquiring the gentleman, I would not lose

lose the spirit of a man. There is a gracefulness in a manly character, a beauty in an open, ingenuous disposition, which all the professed teachers of the arts of pleasing know not to infuse.

CHESTERFIELD.

You and I lived in a state of manners, as different as the periods at which we lived were distant. You Romans, pardon me, my dear, you Romans had a little of the brute in you. Come, come, I must overlook it. You were obliged to court plebeians for their suffrages; and if *similis simili gaudet*, it must be owned, that the greatest of you were secure of their favour. Why, Beau Nash would have handed your Catos and your Brutuses out of the ball-room, if they had shewn their unmannerly heads in it; and my Lord Modish, animated with the conscious merit of the largest or smallest buckles in the room according to the temporary ton, would have laughed Pompey the Great out of countenance. Oh, Cicero, had you lived
in

in a modern European court, you would have caught a degree of that undescribable grace, which is not only the ornament, but may be the substitute of all those laboured attainments which fools call solid merit. But it was not your good fortune, and I make allowances.

CICERO.

The vivacity you have acquired in studying the writings and the manners of the degenerate Gauls, has led you to set too high a value on qualifications which dazzle the lively perceptions with a momentary blaze, and to depreciate that kind of worth which can neither be obtained nor understood without serious attention, and sometimes painful efforts. But I will not contend with you on the propriety or impropriety of the outward modes which delight a monkey nation. I will not spend arguments in proving that gold is more valuable than tinsel, though it glitters less. But I must censure you, and with an asperity too,

too, which, perhaps, your graces may not approve, for recommending vice as graceful, in your memorable letters.

CHESTERFIELD.

That the great Cicero should know so little of the world, really surprises me. A little libertinism, my dear, that's all; how can one be a gentleman without a little libertinism?

CICERO.

I ever thought that to be a gentleman, it was requisite to be a moral man. And surely you, who might have enjoyed the benefit of a light to direct you, which I wanted, were blameable in omitting religion and virtue in your system.

CHESTERFIELD.

What! superstitious too!—You have not then conversed with your superior, the philosopher of Ferney. I thank heaven, I was born in the same age with that great luminary. Prejudice else had perhaps enchained me in the thralldom of my great grandmother. These

I are

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are enlightened days, and I find I have contributed something to the general illumination, by my posthumous letters.

CICERO.

Boast not of them. Remember you were a father.

CHESTERFIELD.

And did I not endeavour most effectually to serve my son, by pointing out the qualifications necessary to a foreign ambassador, for which department I always designed him? Few fathers have taken more pains to accomplish a son, than myself. There was nothing I did not condescend to point out to him.

CICERO.

True ; your condescension was great indeed. You were the pandar of your son. You not only taught him the mean arts of dissimulation, the petty tricks which degrade nobility; but you corrupted his principles, fomented his passions, and even pointed out objects for their gratification. You might have left the task of teaching him fashionable

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vice to a vicious world. Example, and the corrupt affections of human nature, will ever be capable of accomplishing this unnatural purpose. But a parent, the guardian appointed by nature for an uninstructed offspring introduced into a dangerous world, who himself takes upon him the office of seduction, is a monster indeed. I also had a son. I was tenderly solicitous for the right conduct of his education. I intrusted him indeed to Cratippus at Athens; but, like you, I could not help transmitting instructions dictated by paternal love. Those instructions are contained in my book of Offices; a book which has ever been cited by the world as a proof to what a height the morality of the heathens was advanced without the light of revelation. I own I feel a conscious pride in it; not on account of the ability which it may display, but for the principles it teaches, and the good, I flatter myself, it has diffused. You did not indeed intend your instructions for the world; but

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but as you gave them to a son you loved, it may be concluded that you thought them true wisdom, and withheld them only because they were contrary to the professions of the unenlightened. They have been generally read, and tend to introduce the manners, vices, and frivolous habits of the nation you admired, to your own manly nation, who, of all others, once approached most nearly to the noble simplicity of the Romans.

CHESTERFIELD.

Spare me, Cicero. I have never been accustomed to the rough conversation of an old Roman. I feel myself little in his company. I seem to shrink in his noble presence. I never felt my insignificance so forcibly as now. French courtiers and French philosophers have been my models; and amid the dissipation of pleasure, and the hurry of affected vivacity, I never considered the gracefulness of virtue and the beauty of a manly character. I had a love of excellence, and with better models

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should

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should have attained it. I see and venerate it in you, and I request that you will not exert your eloquence to expose my futility, since I confess it; for I still retain, and shall never lose, that regard to character, which permits me not to submit voluntarily to insult and contempt.

E S S A Y XXXIX.

ON THE PROPRIETY OF ADORNING LIFE
BY SOME LAUDABLE EXERTION.

*Is demum mihi vivere et frui animā videtur, quī
aliquo negotio intentus præclari facinoris aut artis
bonæ famam quærit.* SALLUST,

IN an age of degeneracy, when the native powers are weakened by vice, and habits of indolence are superinduced by universal indulgence, the moralist can seldom expect to see examples of that unwearied perseverance, of that generous exertion, which has sometimes appeared in the world, and has been called heroic virtue. Indeed it must be allowed; that in the early periods of society there is greater occasion as well

as greater scope for public spirit, than when all its real wants are supplied, all its securities established, and little left for invention to introduce but refinements in luxury.

Under all these disadvantages there is, indeed, little room for that uncommon exertion which leads a man to desert his sphere, and to act in contradiction to the maxims of personal interest and safety, with a view to reform the manners, or to promote the honour and advantage of the community. Patriotism, as it was understood and practised by a Brutus, a Curtius, a Scævola, or a Socrates, appears in modern times so eccentric a virtue, so abhorrent from the dictates of common sense, that he who should imitate it would draw upon himself the ridicule of mankind, and would be esteemed a madman. Moral and political knight-errantry would appear in scarcely a less ludicrous light than the extravagancies of chivalry.

But to do good in an effectual and extensive manner within the limits of professional

SOME LAUDABLE EXERTION. 391

professional influence, and by performing the business of a station, whatever it may be, not only with regular fidelity, but with warm and active diligence, is in the power, as it is the duty, of every individual. It is surely an unsatisfactory idea, to live and die without pursuing any other purpose than the low one of personal gratification. A thousand pleasures and advantages we have received from the disinterested efforts of those who have gone before us, and it is incumbent on us to do something in our generation, both for the benefit of contemporaries and of those who are to follow.

To be born, as Horace says, merely to consume the fruits of the earth*; to live, as Juvenal observes of some of his countrymen, with no other purpose than to gratify the palate†, though they may in reality be the sole ends of many,

* ——— Fruges consumere nati.

† ——— vivendi in causa palato est.

are yet too inglorious and disgraceful to be avowed by the basest of mankind.

There is little doubt, but that many, whose lives have glided away in an useless tenor, would have been glad of opportunities, if they could have discovered them, for laudable exertion. It is certainly true, that to qualify for political, military, literary, and patriotic efforts, peculiar preparations, accomplishments, occasions, and fortuitous contingencies are necessary. Civil wisdom without civil employment, valour without an enemy, learning without opportunities for its display, the love of our country without power, must terminate in abortive wishes, in designs unsupported by execution. They who form great schemes, and perform great exploits, must necessarily be few. But the exertions which benevolence points out, are extended to a great compass, are infinitely varied in kind and degree, and consequently adapted in some mode or other to the ability of every individual.

To the distinguished honour of our times and of our country, it must be asserted, that there is no species of distress which is not relieved; no laudable institution which is not encouraged with an emulative ardour of liberality. No sooner is a proper object of beneficence presented to the public view, than subscriptions are raised by all ranks, who crowd with impatience to the contribution. Not only the infirmities of age and sickness are soothed by the best concerted establishments, and the loss sustained by the calamities of a conflagration repaired; but our enemies, when reduced to a state of captivity, are furnished with every comfort which their condition can admit, and all the malignity of party hatred melts into kindness under the operation of charity. From the accumulated efforts of a community of philanthropists, a sum of good is produced, far greater than any recorded of the heroes of antiquity from Bacchus to Cæsar.

It

It has been said, that the ages of extraordinary bounty are passed. No colleges are founded in the present times, it is true; yet not because there is no public spirit remaining, but because there is already a sufficient number raised by the pious hands of our forefathers, to answer all the purposes of academical improvement. When a want is supplied, it is not parsimony but prudence which withholds additional bounty. The infirmaries diffused over every part of the kingdom, are most honourable testimonies of that virtue which is to cover a multitude of sins. And there is one instance of beneficence uncommon both in its degree and circumstances, which, though done without a view to human praise, must not lose even the subordinate reward of human virtue. He who lately devoted, during his life, a noble fortune to the relief of the blind, will be placed higher in the esteem of posterity, than the numerous train of posthumous benefactors, who gave what they could no longer

longer retain, and sometimes from motives represented by the censorious as little laudable.

The motive of praise, though by no means the best, is a generous and a powerful motive of commendable conduct. He would do an injury to mankind who should stifle the love of fame. It has burnt with strong and steady heat in the bosoms of the most ingenuous. It has inspired enthusiasm in the cause of all that is good and great. Where patience must have failed and perseverance been wearied, it has urged through troubles deemed intolerable, and stimulated through difficulties dreaded as insurmountable. Pain, penury, danger, and death, have been incurred with alacrity in the service of mankind, with the expectation of no other recompence than an honourable distinction. And let not the frigidity of philosophical rigour damp this noble ardour, which raises delightful sensations in the heart that harbours it, and gives rise to all that is sublime in life and in the arts.

When

When we are so far refined and subdued as to act merely from the slow suggestions of the reasoning faculty, we shall indeed seldom be involved in error; but we shall as seldom achieve any glorious enterprise, or snatch a virtue beyond the reach of prudence.

The spirit of adventure in literary undertakings, as well as in politics, commerce, and war, must not be discouraged. If it produces that which is worth little notice, neglect is easy. There is a great probability, however, that it will often exhibit something conducive to pleasure and improvement. But when every new attempt is checked by severity, or regarded with indifference, learning stagnates, and the mind is depressed, till its productions so far degenerate as to justify disregard. Taste and literature are never long stationary. When they cease to advance, they become retrograde.

Every liberal attempt to give a liberal entertainment is entitled to a kind excuse, though its execution should not
have

have a claim to praise. For the sake of encouraging subsequent endeavours, lenity should be displayed where there is no appearance of incorrigible stupidity, of assuming ignorance, and of empty conceit. Severity chills the opening powers, as the frost nips the bud that would else have been a blossom. It is blameable moroseness to censure those who sincerely mean to please, and fail only from causes not in their own disposal.

The praise, however, of well meaning has usually been allowed with a facility of concession which leads to suspect that it was thought of little value. It has also been received with apparent mortification. This surely is the result of a perverted judgment; for intention is in the power of every man, though he cannot command ability.

THE END.

ERRATA.

- Page 64. line 9. for *Sevigny* read *Seigné*.
184. — 18. place the asterism after *others*.
214. — 7. after *whatever*, insert *merit*.
231. line 14. for *lunæ* read *exuvie*.

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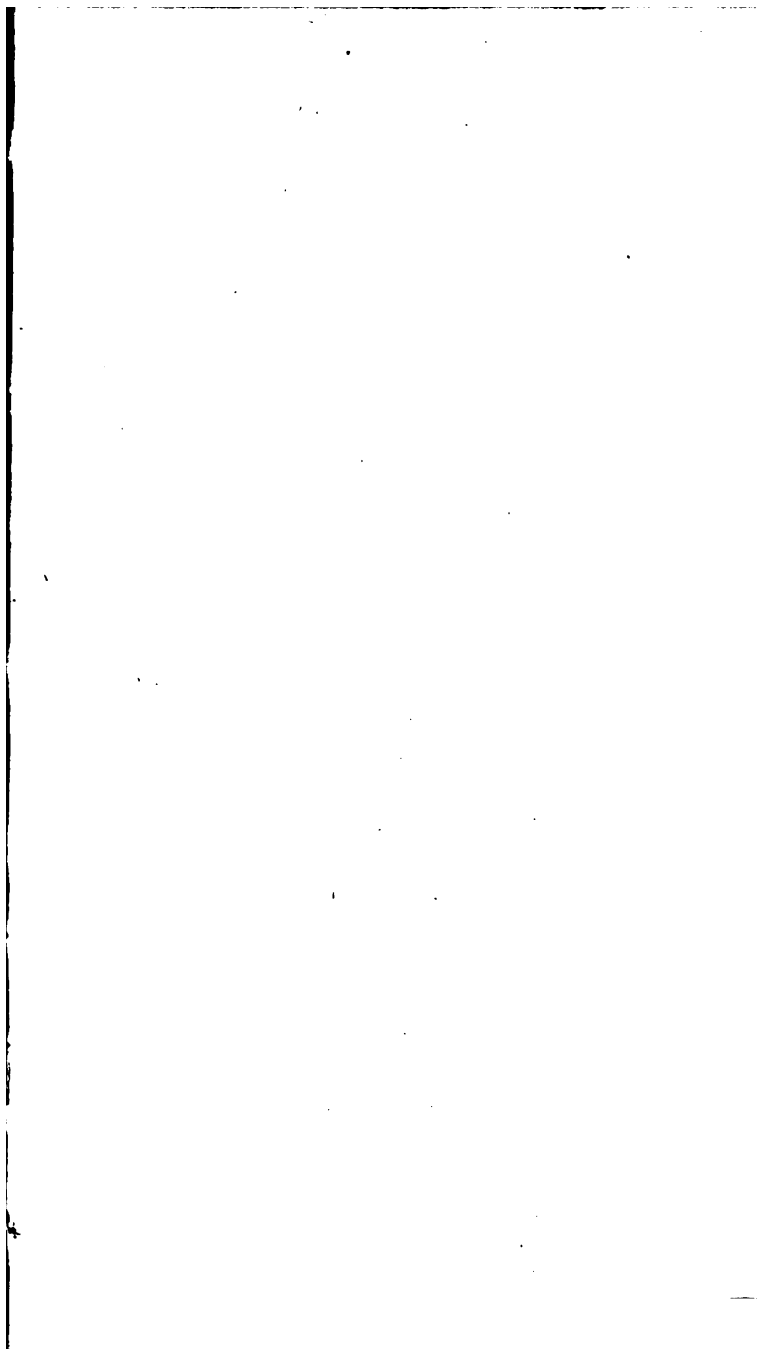
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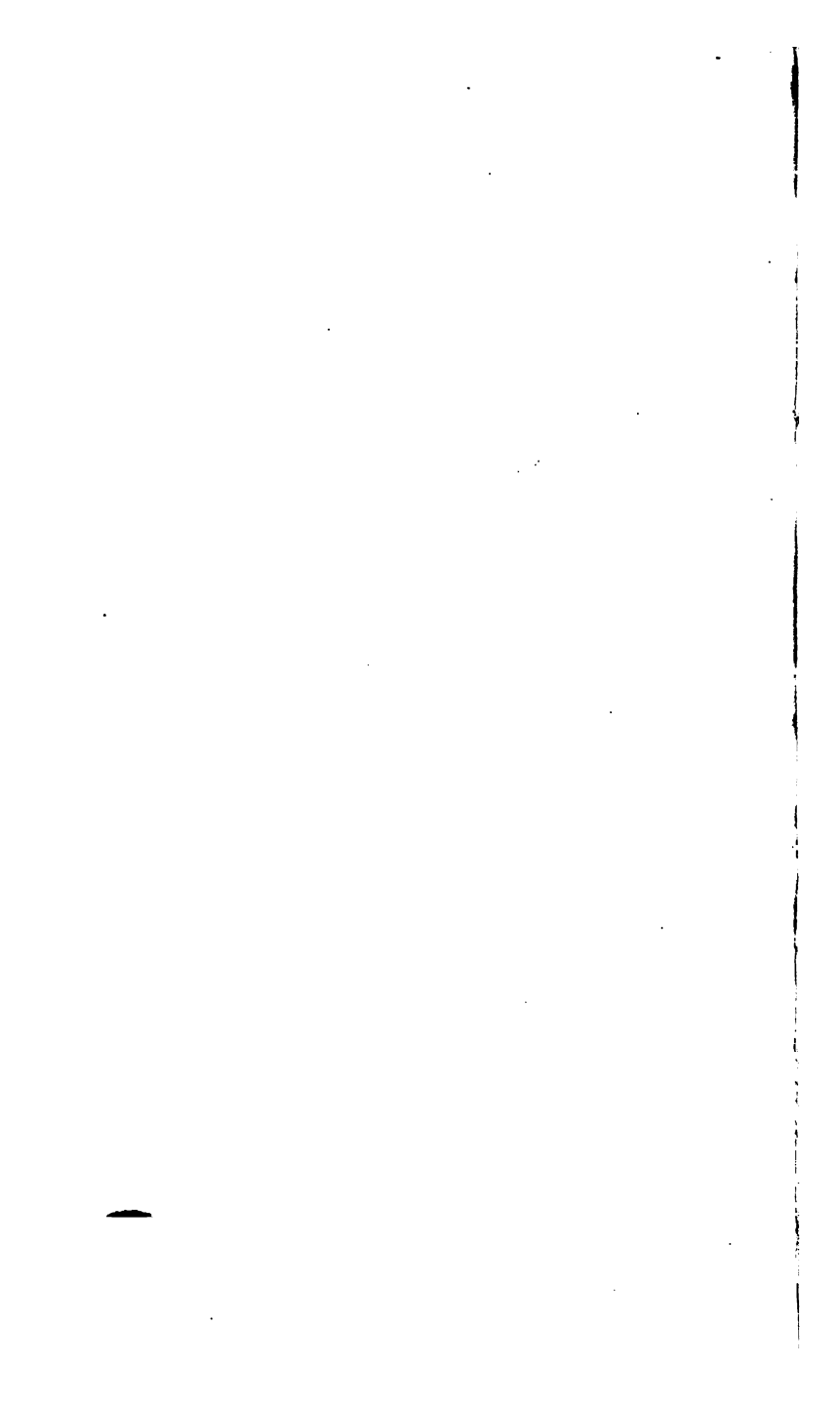
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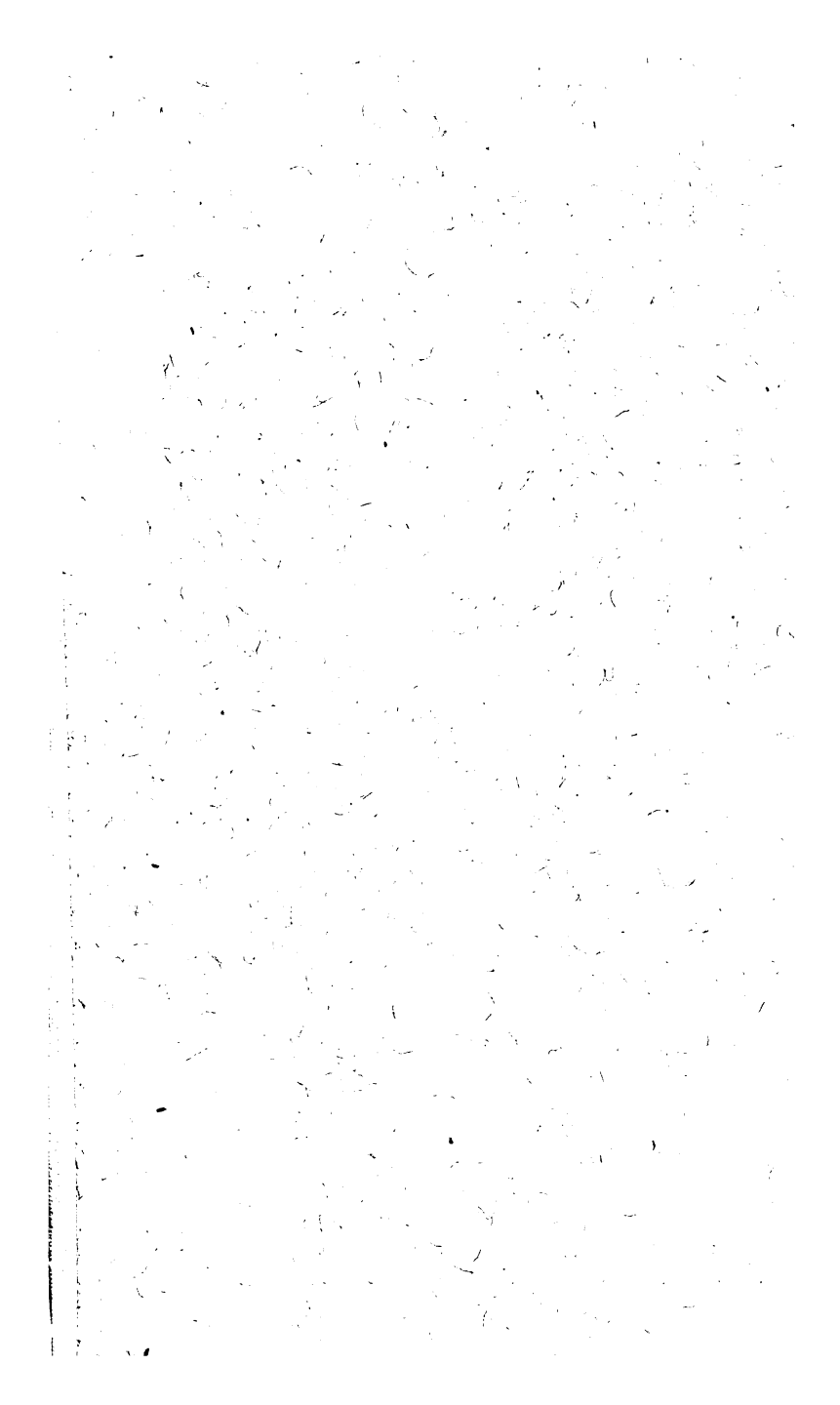
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